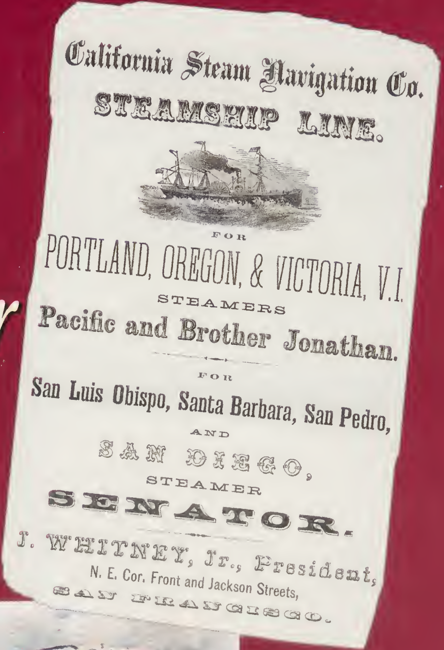
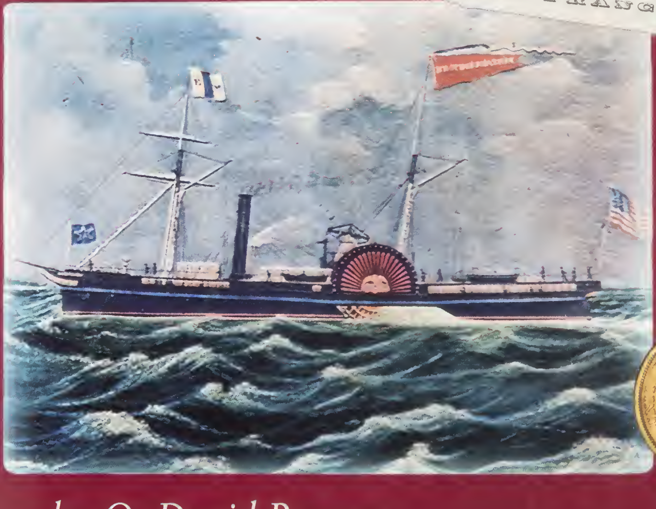
THE TREASURE SHIP *S.S. Brother Jonathan*

Her Life and Loss 1850-1865





by Q. David Bowers

THE TREASURE SHIP
S.S. Brother Jonathan

HER LIFE AND LOSS 1850-1865

by Q. David Bowers

With all good wishes

Eric & Evelyn

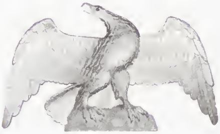
Newman

from

[illegible]

The Treasure Ship *S.S. Brother Jonathan*

Her Life and Loss, 1850-1865



And related subjects:

Money in California–Private coinage–San Francisco Mint, history–
San Francisco Mint, numismatic study–Scenes of the
Gold Rush era–Sidewheel steamships–Life on the ocean–
Traveling aboard the *Brother Jonathan*–Society and amusements
in San Francisco–Money in Oregon–Civil War raiders and
pirates–Thrilling accounts of land and sea!

•

Seeking the *Brother Jonathan*
Deep Sea Research, Inc.
Gold Found!

by Q. David Bowers

About the Author

Q. David Bowers, with Raymond N. Merena, is an owner of Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., and has been in the rare coin business since he was a teenager in 1953. The author is a recipient of the Pennsylvania State University College of Business Administration's Alumni Achievement Award (1976), has served as president of the American Numismatic Association (1983-1985) and president of the Professional Numismatists Guild (1977-1979), is a recipient of the highest honor bestowed by the ANA (the Farran Zerbe Award), was the first ANA member to be named Numismatist of the Year (1995), has been inducted into the Numismatic Hall of Fame (at ANA Headquarters in Colorado Springs), is a recipient of the highest honor given by the Professional Numismatists Guild (The Founders' Award), and has received more "Book of the Year Award" and "Best Columnist" honors given by the Numismatic Literary Guild than has any other writer. He is the author of over 40 books, hundreds of auction and other catalogues, and several thousand articles, including columns in *Coin World* and *The Numismatist*. When *American Heritage* magazine celebrated its 25th anniversary, he wrote the cover article for that issue; the topic was American gold coins.

Regarding California and its coinage, a prime topic of the present work, in 1965 when Stackpole Books worked with the American Numismatic Society to reprint Edgar H. Adams' classic 1913 reference, *Private Gold Coinage of California, 1849-1855*, Dave Bowers provided the new foreword. Over the years he has written extensively about the Gold Rush including in *Adventures with Rare Coins* (1978), *American Coin Treasures and Hoards* (1997), and in *The Numismatist*. He has catalogued and/or presented for sale some of the most important cabinets of California and related gold coins ever to be auctioned including the Garrett Collection (1979-1981 for The Johns Hopkins University), ingots and patterns from the Henry Clifford Collection (1982), the Norweb Collection (1987-1988), the Virgil M. Brand Collection (1983-1984 for the Jane Brand Allen estate via the Morgan Guaranty Trust Co., New York), and the Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection (1982, 1996, and 1997), among others. Along the way he has catalogued examples of every regular issue coin ever struck by the San Francisco Mint including the unique 1870-S $3.

Dave enjoys buying, selling, studying, and writing about coins. Seemingly, the more arcane the avenue of numismatic inquiry, the more he enjoys it! His other interests include American history, financial and monetary history, books, music, natural history, and art.

About the Cover

The copy of the painting of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*, as she appeared in her early years (with two instead of the later three masts), is courtesy of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (the original work is held by the California Historical Society). The advertisement is from Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5. The gold coins are actual specimens recovered from the wreck of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* by Deep Sea Research, Inc.

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Dedication:

To those who traveled on the S.S. Brother Jonathan from 1850 to 1865, especially those who were aboard ship on July 30, 1865, and their descendants

California Steam Navigation Co.

STEAMSHIP LINE.

FOR

PORTLAND, OREGON, & VICTORIA, V.I.

STEAMERS

Pacific and Brother Jonathan.

FOR

San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Pedro,

AND

SAN DIEGO,

STEAMER

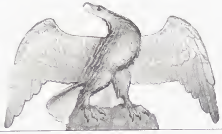
SENATOR.

T. WHITNEY, Jr., President,

N. E. Cor. Front and Jackson Streets,

SAN FRANCISCO.

Advertisement for the sidewheel steamer *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in service from San Francisco north to Portland and Victoria. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5)



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Appreciation is expressed to the following who helped in the ways indicated:

•

California researcher **Dan Owens** spent many hours combing directories and newspaper accounts from the 1850s and, in particular, the 1860s with emphasis on 1865. In addition, he found much later material regarding explorations in the Crescent City area.

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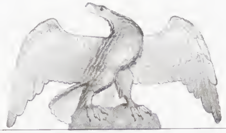
•

Added to the credits are the efforts of those who were on the scene in 1865. Many fascinating stories by survivors of the stricken ship were unearthed, in effect creating an *autobiography* of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* disaster as written by the participants themselves. That is, by the luckier of the participants, for the larger number perished.

Printed sources of information are given in the footnotes and in the Bibliography.



Style and Production Notes

FOOTNOTES: Explanations, amplifications of material, and related information are given in the footnotes. The writer considers *footnotes* to be more convenient for the reader than *end notes*, as, if desired, a related piece of information or a source can be scrutinized quickly. The footnotes give additional material and can be skipped easily enough by anyone desiring to do so. Footnotes in quoted material are modern and are by Q. David Bowers unless attributed otherwise.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Historical photographs are from contemporary newspapers, magazines, books, and other sources and are appropriately credited, as are modern photographs. All coins illustrated in Appendix II are examples actually recovered from the *Brother Jonathan*. Certain coins from the *Brother Jonathan* are shown in Chapter 6 and are identified as such in the captions.

ITALIC TYPE: Ship names are given in italics, as *Brother Jonathan, New World,* etc., although various sources may have had them otherwise as, for example, "Brother Jonathan," Brother Jonathan, or BROTHER JONATHAN. Similarly, book titles are given in italic type.

NAMES OF CREW MEMBERS AND PASSENGERS: The names of passengers and crew members aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* were in many instances spelled differently in different accounts. If a correct spelling is obvious it is used. If there is a question, alternatives are also suggested. A listing of such individuals, fortunate and unfortunate, will be found in Appendix III. Accompanying the names are biographies, if known.

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS: Newspaper accounts concerning the loss of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* were often repetitive. Often, what was essentially the same story that originally appeared in the *San Francisco Bulletin* or the *Alta California* later appeared in many other newspapers as well. Because of this, duplicate accounts are not cited or quoted. Further, accounts are excerpted to reflect material not already quoted. (Also see QUOTED MATERIAL below)

PHOTOGRAPHS OF COINS: Illustrations *when specifically credited as such* represent gold coins recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*; in addition, the cover, title page, and Appendix II illustrations are all from the *Brother Jonathan*. Other illustrations are from the Bowers and Merena photographic archives, especially from the Virgil Brand Collection (1983 and 1984), Clifford Collection (1982), Eliasberg Collection (1982, 1986, and 1987), Garrett Collection (1979-1981), and Norweb Collection (1987-1988).

QUOTED MATERIAL: Some quotations are lightly edited, but in all instances the original meaning has been preserved. Often, newspaper accounts were written and set in type in haste in order to meet fast-closing deadlines, and punctuation and spelling often suffered. The alternative to light editing would have been to have included a long string of [*sic*] interpolations. Many numbers which were spelled out at length in nineteenth-century texts, such as "four hundred and fifty-six" and "the year eighteen hundred and fifty-three," have been changed to, for example, 456 and 1853.

RELIABILITY OF INFORMATION: In instances in which two or more sources, each considered reliable by historians, differ from each other, such differences are mentioned. Ship measurements, rates of speed, numbers of passengers aboard, and accounts of voyages were subject to wide differences in the telling, sometimes with later researchers having no way to know which, if any, accounts were correct. Testimonies and experiences are printed at their face value, with clarifying footnotes added in some instances. While daily newspaper accounts can be regarded as timely, often directories and books contained obsolete information. Accounts printed at a much later date, such as by adventure writers, popular historians, and compilers of treasure seekers' guides often diverge widely from the facts, al-

though there are many notable examples of excellent scholarship. Both the field of steamship history and the field of numismatic history have been carefully studied in connection with the present work. By extensive use of contemporary (circa 1849-1865 for the most part) information, rather than reliance upon later interpretations and theories, the author hopes that the reader will receive information as correct as it is possible to relate. Although many contemporary reports as well as later histories often state precise numbers of businesses established, buildings constructed, value of gold metal found, etc., many such numbers must be regarded as approximations or estimates. As an example, two accomplished journalists, Albert D. Richardson and Samuel Bowles, each were in Portland, Oregon, on the same trip in July 1865, and one stated the population of the city as 5,000 and the other as 7,000 (the closest federal census having been the 1860 count, irrelevant by 1865). Accounts relating to coinage, banking, and economics, if written by casual observers and historians, were often quite inaccurate; in such instances, information believed to be correct is added in the footnotes (a dramatic example is provided by Bowles' account of the lack of Legal Tender notes in California in 1865 and his view of what citizens *really* wanted). Similarly, accounts of ocean travel on the same voyage on the same ship can be vastly different if written by a first-cabin passenger as opposed to someone who booked steerage accommodations, or if written on a smooth voyage instead of during a stormy passage.

Introduction

It is early afternoon on Sunday, July 30, 1865. Under a sunlit but slightly hazy sky the 220-foot *S.S. Brother Jonathan* is plowing her way through waves cresting 20 to 30 feet high, driven by a gale screaming from the northwest. The place is the Pacific Ocean—hardly *pacific* on this day—a few miles offshore from the small village of Crescent City along the rockbound coast of northern California.

Despite her powerful engine rated at 400 horsepower, the sidewheel steamer's headway against the ever-increasing wind now slows to a virtual standstill. After a day of fighting rough waves, she is many hours behind schedule on her trip from San Francisco to Portland. Joining us aboard are about 60 crewmen, 150 or more passengers, and even two circus camels. The list of travelers includes Gen. George Wright, foremost Civil War hero of California, and his wife. Anson G. Henry, a close personal friend of the late President Lincoln, who is set to take his post as the new governor of Washington Territory. His friend and fellow passenger William Logan, who in his position of the newly-authorized superintendent of the federal mint at The Dalles, a boom town in Oregon, is looking forward to planning the construction of the facility. James Nisbet, editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin,* is headed not for Portland, but plans to continue onward to Victoria, in British Columbia. What Rosanna Keenan and the seven attractive girls who are traveling with her have in mind is anybody's guess, but Keenan's reputation as a well known San Francisco madam precedes her.

Below decks, most passengers are still in nightclothes in their beds. The recent noon meal sitting has attracted very few diners. The large and elegantly appointed passenger lounge on the top deck is deserted.

Some 500 tons of cargo in a large storage room on the main deck and in the holds includes a quartz-stamping mill for a gold mine in Idaho, machinery for a woolen mill in Oregon, and, it is said, over 300 barrels of whiskey, among many other things. Given to the purser for safekeeping are precious shipments of hundreds of thousands of dollars in large $20 gold double eagles and $200,000 in newly printed federal Legal Tender currency notes, among other treasure.

The *Brother Jonathan* has little prospect of going further until the headwinds diminish. Captain Samuel J. DeWolf consults his charts, and orders Quartermaster Jacob Yates to turn her wheel around and head to safety in the sheltered harbor at Crescent City. The passengers will be able to stretch their legs and secure refreshments. When the gale abates, the ship will continue its course.

Following a carefully planned course skirting rocks and reefs, the steamer will be in port within the hour. Meanwhile, the waves continue mountain-high.

The time is the early afternoon, about five minutes past one o'clock. Captain DeWolf orders his mate to go forward to prepare the anchors to be lowered by capstans. All of a sudden there it is: a dark and formidable outline just below the surface, the tip of a huge, uncharted rock! Coming down from a wave crest, the fore part of the ship crashes onto the hidden, unyielding prominence. Her keel is broken, her side is ripped asunder, and even the main deck planking is wrenched.

The *Brother Jonathan,* mortally wounded on her underside, tosses and turns, still impaled on the fatal rock. Soon, the foremast collapses as its base is torn away and the ship begins to break apart.

The captain and crew distribute life jackets to those who are able to find their way through the wreckage from their berths and rooms to the main deck. Lifeboats are readied, and some are lowered into the raging surf. One after the other, the rescue vessels are swamped or snagged, and their occupants are lost in the tempestuous waves. Miraculously, one small wooden boat is able to get away from the ship. The ship's cannon fires two distress signals and the American flag is hoisted upside down on the mizzen mast, the universal signal of distress. As the few surviving passengers

look back from their tiny boat—some still in their night clothes and all soaking wet and very cold—the once-proud steamer slips beneath the waves.

The *Brother Jonathan* is no more.

•

Fast forward to 132 years later:

It is a sunny day in August 1997, and I am aboard the *Negotiator,* a motor launch headed out into the Pacific Ocean from the dock at Crescent City. There is a light breeze, the sky is sunny, and along the shore at a distance are patches of "smoke," actually low-lying fog. Leaving the harbor, our boat, about 30 feet long, begins a trip of five miles or more across the water toward a tiny black dot floating in the distance. Blocking part of the view to the open ocean to the left are brown rock outcroppings painted white with eons of bird droppings, sometimes with a sea lion or two near the water line. To the right the rocky shore grows smaller as we go past the large breakwater and proceed out to sea.

Gene Seton, a numismatist and nice fellow who is the numismatic advisor to the Deep Sea Research group, had invited Ray Merena and me to come to the West Coast and watch the recovery of artifacts from the long lost but recently found sidewheel steamship, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* which had been at the bottom of the sea ever since a long-ago summer afternoon in 1865, some 132 years previous to our visit. Joining us on the trip is my 17-year-old son Andrew.

Even though the wind is light at best, and there is not a cloud in the sky, the seas are mountainous, though gentle with no cresting or spray. Our shuttle boat plows smoothly down into the dip of one wave, then up to the top of the peak of the next. In the troughs nothing can be seen except the towering waves to each side. At the top of each wave we can see for miles in all directions.

About a half hour later we draw close to a large black painted ship with AMERICAN SALVOR lettered in white on her bow. The vessel has been anchored in place for

At sea aboard the *Negotiator* on the way to the *American Salvor* moored in the distance. The time is August 1997, and the author, Ray Merena, and Andrew Bowers are all set for a day aboard the treasure recovery ship.

Andrew Bowers (left), consulting numismatist Gene Seton, and Ray Merena on the deck of the *American Salvor.*

several weeks, and during that time a complement of several dozen seamen and a crew of experienced divers have been busy at work as part of a recovery operation that costs close to $30,000 *per day.*

As our shuttle comes along amidships of the *American Salvor,* it becomes obvious that getting from our boat to the big ship will be no easy matter, at least for me. The sea rises and falls constantly, and our transfer boat is either about five or six feet below the landing shelf on the big ship, or is five or six feet above, a differential causing us to bob up and down 10 to 12 feet every few seconds. We have to estimate the just-right time to jump from one boat to another. Being a nautical novice, I have a fear of either missing the jump completely, or being squashed between the two boats as they separately rise and fall. Oh, well, I have had a nice life *up to this point,* I muse silently, trying not to show any fear.

After sizing up about two dozen opportunities and missing them, I finally jump across the breach. Seamen aboard the *American Salvor* reach out to help, and in a wink I am safely aboard. A close call, I think. The more experienced men aboard our shuttle, including men returning from shore leave, make the transfer with ease.

On board I and my two fellow travelers from New Hampshire explore the ship from stem to stern, watch divers being lowered in a pressurized compartment to depths some 255 feet below, and view the video monitor as they walk and grope among the ghostly remains of what was once the steamship *Brother Jonathan.* On board, in a special strongroom, I examine many of the coins that had been brought up, including some really marvelous $20 gold double eagles, mostly dated 1865. Of course, all of this is an exciting adventure for me, and a great deal of fun.

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Stories of ships and their treasures have fascinated me for a long time. A few years ago I spent much time delving through books, old newspapers, and other sources in the

Ray Merena and Dave Bowers aboard the *American Salvor.*

course of conducting research for a book that was published in early 1997, *American Coin Treasures and Hoards.* Chapter 11, titled "Gold from the Briny Deep," was described in the Table of Contents:

> Time was when vast quantities of newly-minted gold coins were shipped by sea from San Francisco—commercial center of the Gold Rush—to other places, especially to the East Coast, but not all reached their destinations. The stories of the *S.S. Winfield Scott, Yankee Blade, Central America,* and *Brother Jonathan* have many thrilling as well as tragic aspects that are stranger than the most imaginative fiction!

Little did I know that I would soon be involved in the latest events with the *Brother Jonathan* and those who found her. Seeking to expand my knowledge beyond the relatively few pages I related about this particular ship in my *American Coin Treasures and Hoards,* I began searching for every scrap of information I could find, helped greatly by the archives assembled by Deep Sea Research and efforts expended in various California libraries by researcher Dan Owens. Before long, a fascinating account began to emerge, a nineteenth-century saga filled with excitement, contradictions, selflessness and selfishness, adventure, and more. In the meantime, I found myself transported as if by magic to over a century ago. It was almost like being in San Francisco in the summer of 1865 and boarding the *Brother Jonathan.* Before long I realized that a *book* was in the offing. And, here it is!

Regarding the significance of the ship to American numismatics, it is perhaps relevant to note that of the *thousands* of shipwrecks located over a long span of years—just *two*—the *Brother Jonathan* and the *Central America* (sunk in 1857)—have yielded a significant number of rare United States coins. Four fine books have been written to date about the treasure-laden *S.S. Central America.* Now, it is the *Brother Jonathan's* turn.

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As I considered ways to write this book, my thoughts ranged from the easy path to the difficult. The first would have involved a brief account of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and her demise, followed by the story of the exploration for her treasure.

Never being a person to take the easy route, I opted for the second way, a comprehensive view, with the thought that a much shorter version could be included in a catalogue of the auction presentation of the coins found. I arranged a working plan for the book which included the fascinating, at times almost unbelievable story of coins and currency on the West Coast in the Gold Rush era in which the story was set, the scene in San Francisco (home port of the sidewheel steamer) in the 1850s and 1860s, the "life" of the *Brother Jonathan* from beginning to end, and the treasure recovery exploits of Deep Sea Research, Inc., and those who explored before.

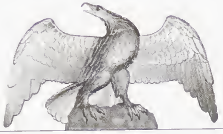
The more I delved into the subject, the more fascinated I became. It was soon evident that the *Brother Jonathan* was an integral part of life and commerce in San Francisco for many years, and for a time in Oregon and British Columbia as well. From the early 1850s until 1865, her comings and goings were published in the San Francisco newspapers, as were accounts of the treasure she carried and information concerning notable passengers. When the first major history was published concerning the city, *The Annals of San Francisco,* 1855, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was showcased in an article involving several pages, whereas other ships received but brief mentions or a paragraph or two. Ironically, James Nisbet, one of the three authors of the *Annals,* would be a passenger aboard the *Brother Jonathan* on her final trip a decade later.

While I have enjoyed financial history, gold coins, and California lore for a long time, the *Brother Jonathan* project provided me with a special opportunity to immerse myself in these subjects, beginning with investigations in my own extensive library and archives, supplemented by many historical items gathered by Deep Sea Research, Inc., Dan Owens, and other sources, eventually amounting to over 400 printed sources plus other research. Bringing the story up to date, Chris Karstedt of the Bowers and Merena staff conducted interviews with and assembled information from treasure seekers involved with Deep Sea Research.

If you take the time to read all through the following narrative, I believe that you will be as conversant as anyone with the era under discussion, and may become an *expert* on the subjects of California gold coins, the early days of the San Francisco Mint, and one of the most notable ships in the saga of such coins, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* On the other hand, if you want to "cut to the chase" you can begin with Chapter 7, which starts the story of the ship, or go directly to Chapter 12, which tells of the last day of her life.

Whichever route you take, enjoy!

Chapter One



The Gold Rush in California

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and Gold

As was true of the best of the Forty Niners and other Gold Rush participants, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was born in the East, but spent most of her life in California, and died there. Thus, the saga of California and its fabulous gold discoveries is in essence part of the story of the ship itself.

After a brief stint in the Atlantic Ocean on the run from New York City to Panama, the sidewheel steamer departed for California, going around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. From that time onward, San Francisco was the home port of the *Brother Jonathan*.

In the early years she ran from there down the coast of California and Mexico to Nicaragua, from which passengers and freight crossed land to the east side of that country, then took another steamer north to New York City, New Orleans, or another destination. Often, vast amounts of gold coins were carried aboard, including sparkling $20 gold double eagles after the San Francisco Mint opened for business in 1854.

In the late 1850s and in the 1860s the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was in service north from San Francisco to Portland and British Columbia, participating in two more gold rushes! Again, her role was important as she carried large amounts of precious metal and countless passengers.

The setting for the story begins in the late 1840s:

Gold in California

The large-scale discovery of gold in California in 1848 set in motion a westward migration the equal of which had never been seen.

From settlements in Jamestown (Virginia) in 1607, Massachusetts Bay in 1620, and other outposts, Europeans and other immigrants during the next 150 years built what became the United States. By 1848, civilization in the refined sense extended along the Eastern Seaboard from Florida to Maine, and inland to, perhaps, St. Louis. Farther west, conditions were largely primitive, and large areas remained unexplored. Within the space of a *decade* this would change dramatically. California would become a dynamic state, Oregon and Washington would be developed, and soon thereafter, Nevada would undergo vast changes including achieving statehood.

The catalyst was *gold*.

On January 24, 1848 the new era began.

Early Discoveries

In June 1841, or possibly beginning in the spring of 1842, there had been a "rush" of sorts at San Francisquito, about 35 miles to the northwest of the small Spanish settlement of Los Angeles. Gold was found in nugget form by Francisco Lopez who was digging wild onions. About 19 ounces of gold nuggets and dust from that find were shipped by Abel Stearns on November 22, 1842, to the far-off Philadelphia Mint, and many months later an assay report was made.[1] The San Francisquito area, also known as San Feliciano Canyon, attracted gold seekers, mostly Mexicans from

[1] Information favoring 1842 is from a letter of Abel Stearns enclosing receipts, etc., dated July 8, 1867, in response to an inquiry from the Society of California Pioneers (reproduced in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, pp. 21-22). A memorandum from the Philadelphia Mint, July 8, 1843, showed that the Stearns shipment weighed 18-34/100 oz. before melting and 18-1/100 oz. after melting; fineness .926, value $344.75; less shipment and other expenses, net return $340.73. • Information favoring June 1841 is reprinted in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, p. 20, and places the same discovery at "San Francisco Ranch, about 45 miles westerly from Los Angeles City, in the month of June 1841," the discoverer again stated as Lopez. • The Society of California Pioneers believed June 1841 to be the correct date

Sonora, until autumn 1844. In a letter to the *New York Sun*, June 30, 1846, Thomas O. Larkin commented on the growth and attractions of California, mentioning the same gold find of 1841-2:[1]

> This country...is now discovering mines of every description–near the town of the Angels–there is a large sandy plain at the foot of some mountains where a common laborer can pick up placer gold[2] to the amount of $10 & upwards a day–ounce pieces have been found–the whole process to shake up the sand with water in a plate or flat basket–this gold is worth as it comes from the sand $12 to $15 in California, $17 in U.S. per ounce....

Stories of other gold finds here and there in California prior to 1848 are numerous, including of Indians bringing quantities of precious metals to the Catholic missions that were built by Spanish priests and their helpers along the seacoast.[3]

However, California remained a fairly quiet, agrarian place, with settlements few and far between. Around some of the missions small villages had been built, and in other places there were a few sleepy pueblos.

Toward the north, inland from the port of Yerba Buena, John A. Sutter, a Swiss, presided over his own fiefdom, Sutter's Fort, at New Helvetia ("New Switzerland"), the site of present-day Sacramento. Ringed with high adobe walls and fortified with several ships' guns, Sutter's Fort incorporated an interior plaza ringed with small shops for blacksmithing, carpentry, and other trades. Sutter's Fort was a trading post, a central depot from which employees could travel to attend ranging cattle, or visit to obtain household and farm supplies. In case of danger from hostile Indians, the newcomers could retreat within the gates of the fort. Indians, or more properly today, native Americans, were at once the *bête noir* and nemesis of the settlers. Echoing the 1805 words of English satirist and medal engraver Daniel Eccleston, any one of them could rightfully say, "the land *was* ours."

In 1848, John A. Sutter, a Swiss immigrant, operated Sutter's Fort. The outpost, also called New Helvetia, commanded tens of thousands of acres of agricultural and pasturage lands as well as streams and forests at the location where the city of Sacramento would soon be built. Sutter and his associates kept busy trading with local settlers and Indians and the everyday aspects of farming and cattle raising. (*The Discovery of Gold in California*)

The preceding few years had been ones of expansion in the American West, including the coming of hundreds of settlers from the East. The major influx in the mid-1840s was to the north along the Oregon Trail, terminating at Oregon City. However, by that decade settlements by English and American citizens already had included the two fur-trading posts of Astoria on the Oregon coast and Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, the former the namesake of New Yorker John Jacob Astor and the latter managed by the Hudson's Bay Company.

During the 1846-1848 War with Mexico, many immigrants came to California from the East, a journey of about five months across vast areas of mostly uncharted mountains, deserts, and alkali flats, the Great American Desert. The terrible fate of the Donner Party, which was stranded high in the Sierras near the border of California in 1846-7, is well known, but many other travelers suffered as well–from heat, cold, thirst, hunger, unfriendly Indians, sickness, and exhaustion. Many were the graves hastily made along the several trails and branches on their way west. Dozens of books and journals have been published on the migration west *before* the California Gold Rush, primarily in connection with the Oregon Trail.

By 1847 the territory known as Alta (Upper) California was *de facto* under American control, and on May 31 of that year, Col. Richard B. Mason assumed the post of territorial governor. After winning the War with Mexico in 1848, most Americans felt that Mexico no longer had any valid claims to the area.

Sutter's Mill

In the late 1840s, as settlers moved into the fertile lands in California between the Sierras and the Pacific Ocean,

[1] Reproduced in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, p. 23. In 1843 Larkin had been appointed the first American (and, as it turned out the last) consul representing the United States in California. • In 1967-1968 the author visited San Feliciano Canyon, then part of an isolated ranch, but not a trace of the early gold seekers was evident. The area was bone-dust dry, indicating that in the 1840s gold extraction must have been difficult if washing was employed, unless work was done in the brief rainy season.

[2] Extracting gold from alluvial deposits was called *placer* (pronounced "plasser") mining.

[3] Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, in an account written circa 1839, includes mention of a small quantity of gold dust taken aboard his ship in California and speculation concerning its source: "I heard rumors of gold discoveries, but they attracted little or no attention and were not followed up." (Citation furnished by Robert W. Shippee.)

Sutter's sawmill on the American River was the site of the gold discovery that ignited the passions of the world. On January 24, 1848, James Marshall, an employee of John Sutter, glimpsed a yellow flake in the tail race of the newly built mill. Historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, chronicler of the American West, later described the discovery: "It must be gold! And the mighty secret of the Sierra stood revealed!" The "mighty secret" could not be contained, and within a few months the entire territory was teeming with gold seekers; the seeds had been sown for the Gold Rush, and America would never be the same. Although many views of Sutter's mill have been published, this early depiction is probably among the more accurate. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

Map of the area of Sutter's Mill. Details include the channel dug in the gravel bank to run water through the mill and the all-important tail race where on January 24, 1848, James Marshall found the flake of gold. (Bancroft, *History of California*)

John A. Sutter sensed that there would be a good market for lumber. He sent out several parties to seek a spot on a river where a mill could be erected for the processing of lumber, including wood needed to finish a grist mill he had started. James W. Marshall, an uneducated but quite skillful craftsman and carpenter who had come to the area from New Jersey, was sent with others to investigate.[1] Finally, Marshall and his crew decided upon a spot on the American River at a site which the Indians had named Coloma, about 35 miles in a straight line from Sutter's Fort and about 50 by horse trail. Meanwhile, the old Spanish settlement of Yerba Buena became known generally as San Francisco.[2]

By mid-January, 1848, the mill structure had been erected, but it was found that the race or ditch which diverted water to power the millwheel, was not deep enough. Marshall devised a plan whereby the upper entrance to the race would be left wide open all night, permitting the water to rush down and scour out the bottom of the channel to deepen it. On the afternoon of January 24 his eye caught a reflection from a little yellow flake that had been washed into the bed. He picked up the chip and found that it could be bent, something that was quite unusual. It might be gold! Marshall knew that iron pyrite, or "fool's gold," looked like gold, but was brittle. This little flake, when pounded between two stones, flattened, but did not break.[3]

"I've found it!" Marshall cried to William Scott, one of this fellow workers. History was made. Later, "I've found it" was incorporated into the state motto, "Eureka," which means the same thing. Several decades afterward, historian Hubert Howe Bancroft's description of that epochal moment concluded with:

"It must be gold! And the mighty secret of the Sierra stood revealed!"[4]

Sutter's Own Story

Subsequently, in a contribution to *Hutchings' California Magazine* John A. Sutter gave a first-hand account of what happened.[5]

To Build a Sawmill

It was in the first part of January 1848, when the gold was discovered at Coloma, where I was then building a sawmill. The contractor and builder of this mill was James W. Marshall, from New Jersey. In the fall of 1847, after the mill seat had been located, I sent up to this place Mr. P.L. Wimmer with his family, and a number of laborers, from the disbanded Mormon Battalion; and a little later I engaged Mr. Bennett from Oregon to assist Mr. Marshall in the mechanical labors of the mill. Mr. Wimmer had the team in charge, assisted by his young sons, to do the necessary teaming, and Mrs. Wimmer did the cooking for all hands.

I was very much in need of a sawmill, to get lumber to finish my large flouring mill of four run of stones, at Brighton, which was commenced at the same time, and was rapidly progressing, likewise for other buildings, fences, etc., for the small village of Yerba Buena (now San Francisco). In the City Hotel (the only one) at the dinner table this enterprise was unkindly called "another folly of Sutter's," as my first settlement at the old fort near Sacramento City was called by a good many, "a folly of his," and they were about right in that, because I had the best chances to get some of the finest locations, near the settlements; and even well stocked ranchos had been offered to me on the most reasonable conditions; but I refused all these good offers, and preferred to explore the wilderness, and select a territory on the banks of the Sacramento [River].

James W. Marshall's Find

It was a rainy afternoon when Mr. Marshall arrived at my office in the Fort, very wet. I was somewhat surprised to see him, as he was down a few days previous; and when I sent up to Coloma a number of teams with provisions, mill irons, etc., etc. He told me then that he had some important and interesting news which he wished to communicate secretly to me and wished me to go with him to a place where we should not be disturbed, and where no listeners could come and hear what we had to say.

I went with him to my private rooms. He requested me to lock the door. I complied, but I told him at the same time that nobody was in the house except the clerk, who was in his office in a different part of the house. After requesting of me something which he wanted, which my servants brought and then left the room, I forgot to lock the doors, and it happened that the door was opened by the clerk just at the moment when Marshall took a rag from his pocket, showing me the yellow metal. He had about two ounces of it; but how quick Mr. M. put the yellow metal in his pocket again can hardly be described. The clerk came to see me on business, and excused himself for interrupting me, and as soon as he had left I was

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, pp. 27 ff., includes the following and much more: Marshall was born in 1812 in Hope Township, Hunterdon County, NJ. His father introduced him to the wagon-building trade. At age 21 he moved to Missouri, where he secured a homestead land claim, but he became ill, anticipations were not met, and in May 1844 he followed the Oregon Trail to the Northwest, arriving there by winter. Afterward, he joined the McMahon - Clyman party and went south to California.

[2] The name change was officially made in January 1847 by the alcalde (mayor) of the town (cf. *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 157).

[3] For a long time January 19, 1848 was considered to be the date of the discovery. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859 (published in 1888), pp. 32 ff., clarifies the matter; similarly, Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 62 ff. gives a detailed account including the January 24, 1848 discovery date. Later, an essay by John S. Hittell in *Century Magazine*, February 1890, related the following, essentially paraphrasing much of what Bancroft had said and adding some other details: "Nothing was said in public about the date of the discovery until 1856, eight years after the event, when Marshall published a letter in which he said that he found gold at Coloma 'about the 19th' of January, 1848. Neither then, nor at any subsequent time, did he claim that his recollection of the day was aided by a written memorandum. In 1857 he published a statement that the discovery was made on the 18th, 19th, or 20th. His biography, prepared under his direction and printed in 1870, fixed the 19th as the precise day...." Hittell related that Henry W. Bigler, a Mormon who was on the construction crew of Sutter's Mill on the American River, had kept a diary which clearly stated that "this day some kind of mettle was found in the tail race that looks liak goald, first discovered hy James Martial, the boss of the Mill." Bigler's diary had been cited by Bancroft earlier.

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, p. 33.

[5] November 1857, "The Discovery of Gold in California." Subheads added.

• Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 70-73, gives another first person account "delivered me from his own lips by General Sutter"; see another account by Sutter, as given to J. Tyrwhitt Brooks by Sutter, is given on pp. 73-74; also accounts of the discovery by James Marshall (pp. 72-73) and Mrs. Wimmer (pp. 74-76).

told, "Now lock the doors; didn't I tell you that we might have listeners?"

I told him that he need fear nothing about that, as it was not the habit of this gentleman; but I could hardly convince him that he need not to be suspicious. Then Mr. M. began to show me this metal, which consisted of small pieces and specimens, some of them worth a few dollars. He told me that he had expressed his opinion to the laborers at the mill, that this might be gold; but some of them were laughing at him and called him a crazy man, and could not believe such a thing.

After having proved the metal with aqua fortis, which I found in my apothecary shop, likewise with other experiments, and read the long article "gold" in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, I declared this to be gold of the finest quality, of at least 23 carats.

Return to Coloma

After this Mr. M. had no more rest nor patience, and wanted me to start with him immediately for Coloma; but I told him I could not leave, as it was late in the evening and nearly supper time, and that it would be better for him to remain with me till the next morning, and I would travel with him, but this would not do. He asked me only, "Will you come tomorrow morning?"

I told him yes, and off he started for Coloma in the heaviest rain, although already very wet, taking nothing to eat. I took this news very easy, like all other occurrences good or bad, but thought a great deal during the night about the consequences which might follow such a discovery. I gave all my necessary orders to my numerous laborers, and left the next morning at 7 o'clock, accompanied by an Indian soldier, and vaquero, in a heavy rain, for Coloma.

About half way on the road I saw at a distance a human being crawling out from the brushwood. I asked the Indian who it was; he told me, "The same man who was with you last evening." When I came nearer I found it was Marshall, very wet. I told him that he would have done better to remain with me at the fort than to pass such an ugly night here; but he told me that he went up to Coloma (54 miles), took his other horse and came half way to meet me. Then we rode up to the new Eldorado.[1] In the afternoon the weather was clearing up, and we made a prospecting promenade.

Sutter's Fort as it appeared circa 1848 in the first year of the Gold Rush. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

Discoveries at the Mill

The next morning we went to the tail-race of the mill, through which the water was running during the night, to clean out the gravel which had been made loose, for the purpose of widening the race; and after the water was out of the race we went in to search for gold. This was done every morning. Small pieces of gold could be seen remaining on the bottom of the clean washed bedrock. I went in the race and picked up several pieces of this gold, several of the laborers gave me some, which they had picked up, and from Marshall I received a part. I told them that I would get a ring made of this gold as soon as it could be done in California; and I have had a heavy ring made, with my family's coat of arms engraved on the outside, and on the inside of the ring is engraved, "The first gold, discovered in January 1848." Now if Mrs. Wimmer possesses a piece which has been found earlier than mine Mr. Marshall can tell,[2] as it was probably received from him. I think Mr. Marshall could have hardly known himself, which was exactly the first little piece, among the whole.[3]

The next day I went with Mr. M. on a prospecting tour in the vicinity of Coloma, and the following morning I left for Sacramento. Before my departure I had a conversation with all hands: I told them that I would consider it as a great favor if they would keep this discovery secret only for six weeks, so that I could finish my large flour mill at Brighton (with four run of stones), which had cost me already about from 24 to 25,000 dollars—the people up there promised to keep it secret so long.

The Secret is Told

On my way home, instead of feeling happy and contented, I was very unhappy, and could not see that it would benefit me much, and I was perfectly right in thinking so; as it came just precisely as I expected. I thought at the same time that it could hardly be kept secret for six weeks; and in this I was not mistaken, for about two weeks later, after my return, I sent up several teams in charge of a white man, as the teamsters were Indian boys. This man was acquainted with all hands up there, and Mrs. Wimmer told him the whole secret; likewise the young sons of Mr. Wimmer told him that they had gold and that they would let him have some too; and so he obtained a few dollars' worth of it as a present.

As soon as this man arrived at the fort he went to a small store in one of my outside buildings, kept by Mr. Smith, a partner of Samuel Brannan,[4] and asked for a bottle of brandy, for which he would pay the cash; after having the bottle he

[1] Eldorado, usually spelled as two words, El Dorado, equivalent to "golden man" in Spanish, became a synonym for a location of great wealth.

[2] Footnote from the original Sutter text: "Mrs. Wimmer's piece weighs about five dollars and 12 cents. The *first piece*, Mr. Marshall says, weighed about 50 cents."

[3] However, a flake purporting to be the *very first* piece was later given to the Smithsonian Institution (this flake is illustrated from two angles in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, 1949).

[4] Samuel Brannan, a disaffected Mormon, was the person associated with Sutter's Fort to benefit the most from the gold discovery. Biographical notes: Brannan was born in Saco, Maine, March 2, 1819. In 1846 he gathered supplies and formed a company to bring to California a group of settlers, a printing press, machinery, plows, etc., for a new life, coming on the ship *Brooklyn*. The vessel left New York in February 1846 and went to the Sandwich Islands to restock provisions. On July 31, 1846, the *Brooklyn* reached San Francisco, then called Yerba Buena. In autumn 1847 Brannan started a store at Sutter's Fort in partnership with and under the name of C. C. Smith. In spring 1848 he bought out Smith, who went back to the eastern states, after which the enterprise was known as S. Brannan & Com-

paid with these small pieces of gold. Smith was astonished and asked him if he intended to insult him; the teamster told him to go and ask me about it. He reported it to Mr. S. Brannan, who came up immediately to get all possible information, when he returned he sent up large supplies of goods, leased a larger house from me, and commenced a very large and profitable business; soon he opened a branch house of business at Mormon Island.[1]

Mr. Brannan made a kind of claim on Mormon Island, and put a tolerably heavy tax on "the Latter Day Saints." I believe it was 30%, which they paid for some time, until they got tired of it (some of them told me that it was for the purpose of building a temple for the honor and glory of the Lord).

So soon as the secret was out my laborers began to leave me, in small parties first, but then all left, from the clerk to the cook, and I was in great distress. Only a few mechanics remained to finish some very necessary work which they had commenced, and about eight invalids, who continued slowly to work a few teams, to scrape out the mill race at Brighton. The Mormons did not like to leave my mill unfinished, but they got the gold fever like everybody else. After they had made their piles they left for the Great Salt Lake.[2] So long as these people have been employed by me they have behaved very well, and were industrious and faithful laborers, and when settling their accounts there was not one of them who was not contented and satisfied.

The "Rush" Begins

Then the people commenced rushing up from San Francisco and other parts of California, in May 1848. In the former village only five men were left to take care of the women and children. The single men locked their doors and left for "Sutter's Fort," and from there to the Eldorado. For some time the people in Monterey and farther south would not believe the news of the gold discovery, and said that it was only a *Ruse de Guerre* of Sutter's, because he wanted to have neighbors in his wilderness. From this time on I got only too many neighbors and some very bad ones among them.

What a great misfortune was this sudden gold discovery for me! It has just broken up and ruined my hard, restless, and industrious labors, connected with many dangers of life, as I had many narrow escapes before I became properly established.

From my mill buildings I reaped no benefit whatever, the millstones even have been stolen and sold. My tannery, which was then in a flourishing condition, and was carried on very profitably, was deserted, a large quantity of leather was left unfinished in the vats; and a great quantity of raw hides became valueless as they could not be sold; nobody wanted to be bothered with such trash, as it was called. So it was in all the other mechanical trades which I had carried on. All was abandoned, and work commenced or nearly finished was all left, to an immense loss for me.

Even the Indians had no more patience to work alone, in harvesting and threshing my large wheat crop out; as the whites had all left, and other Indians had been engaged by some white men to work for them, and they commenced to have some gold for which they were buying all kinds of articles at enormous prices in the stores; which, when my Indians saw this, they wished very much to go to the mountains and dig gold. At last I consented, got a number of wagons ready, loaded them with provisions and goods of all kinds, employed a clerk, and left with about 100 Indians, and about 50 Sandwich Islanders (Kanakas) which had joined those which I brought with me from the Islands.

The first camp was about 10 miles above Mormon Island on the south fork of the American River. In a few weeks we became crowded, and it would no more pay, as my people made too many acquaintances. I hroke up the camp and started on the march further south, and located my next camp on Sutter Creek (now in Amador County), and thought that I should there be alone. The work was going on well for a while, until three or four traveling grog-shops surrounded me, at from one and a half to two miles distance from the camp; then, of course, the gold was taken to these places, for drinking, gambling, etc., and then the following day they were sick and unable to work, and became deeper and more indebted to me, particularly the Kanakas.

I found that it was high time to quit this kind of business, and lose no more time and money. I therefore broke up the camp and returned to the Fort, where I disbanded nearly all the people who had worked for me in the mountains digging gold. This whole expedition proved to be a heavy loss to me.

Potential Riches to Seeming Ruin

At the same time I was engaged in a mercantile firm in Coloma, which I left in January 1849—likewise with many sacrifices. After this I would have nothing more to do with the gold affairs. At this time, the Fort was the great trading place where nearly all the business was transacted. I had no pleasure to remain there, and moved up to Hock Farm, with all my Indians, who had been with me from the time they were children. The place was then in the charge of a Major Domo....

By this sudden discovery of the gold, all my great plans were destroyed. Had I succeeded with my mills and manufactories for a few years before the gold was discovered, I should have been the richest citizen on the Pacific shore; but it had to be different. Instead of being rich, I am ruined, and the cause of it is the long delay of the United States Land Commission, of the United States Courts, through the great influence of the squatter lawyers.[3]

Before my case will be decided in Washington, another year may elapse, but I hope that justice will be done me by the last tribunal—the Supreme Court of the United States. By the Land Commission and the District Court it has been decided in my favor. The Common Council of the city of Sacramento, composed partly of squatters, paid Alpheus Felch (one of the late Land Commissioners, who was engaged by the squatters during his office), $5,000, from the fund of the city, against the will of the taxpayers, for which amount he has to try to defeat my just and old claim from the Mexican government, before the Supreme Court of the United States in Washington.

Notwithstanding Sutter's account, for at least the several years after 1849, Sutter's Fort exuded an air of prosper-

pany. When and after gold was discovered, Brannan was very active in business. As the Gold Rush progressed, Brannan's business flourished. In the 1850s he bought and put up many buildings, and by the middle of the decade he was one of the wealthiest men in the state. In 1853 he was elected a state senator. Brannan is widely noted in histories of the city and state including in the *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 648 ff.

[1] Mormon Island was more familiarly known as Mormon Bar and was manned by dozens of men of that faith who were on their was back to Salt Lake City from service in the War with Mexico.

[2] At Salt Lake City, beginning in 1849, the Mormons set up their own mint to coin gold brought back from California. Eventually coins of $2.50, $5, $10 and $20 denominations were made, all severely light in weight in comparison to federal coins. However, in Mormon territory they circulated at par by official decree. In distant places the Mormon coins were accepted only at deep discounts.

[3] Many early land claims and titles which had been acquired during the era of Mexican rule were contested or disregarded by later settlers.

ity. Sutter sold his half-interest in the sawmill on the American River for $6,000.[1] His nemesis was his still incomplete flouring (grist) mill some distance away at Brighton, which he had hoped to finish with lumber from his sawmill. In Sutter's own words, somewhat reiterating the preceding account:

> My gristmill was never finished. Everything was stolen, even the stone. There is a saying that men will steal everything but a milestone and a millstone. They stole my mill stones. They stole the bells from the fort, and gate-weights, the hides they stole, and salmon barrels.... Some of the cannon at the fort were stolen.... My property was all left exposed, and at the mercy of the rabble, when gold was discovered. My men all deserted me.... The country swarmed with lawless men. Emigrants drove their stock into my yard and used my grass with impunity. Expostulation did no good. I was alone. There was no law....

By 1853 Sutter moved from his fort and had established himself in a "modest dwelling" at Hock Farm on the west bank of the Feather River about seven miles below Marysville. "His new habitation is surrounded by well cultivated grounds, and at a short distance from it are the burrows of the few faithful Indians who have followed the fortunes of their former master and protector.... The proprietor is rearing a large and flourishing vineyard."[2] Sutter himself was delighted to welcome visitors into his home (although Mrs. Sutter rarely was seen).[3]

By that time Sutter had become a bitter man, possibly unjustifiably so, for few in the area possessed his wealth. Granted, the situation had changed, and he was no longer master of all he surveyed. But, he had many assets, a fine reputation, good health, and could have played a further role in the development of the area.[4]

The city of Sacramento, which had grown up around his fort, seemed to pass him by. His lands, earlier granted to him by Mexican interests, were taken over by others, and his business declined. He spent much time petitioning the state, then the federal government, for compensation he felt he was due. In 1870 he was granted a pension of $250 per month. This was paid for six years, after which time Sutter went to Washington, DC, and other eastern areas to further his claims in person. Unlike his status in California, he achieved little recognition in the East, his state pension was suspended, and he died, still with much bitterness in his heart, in the East on June 18, 1880, and was buried in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

As for Marshall, the man credited for finding the first flake of gold in the mill race on the American River at Coloma, he achieved no lasting wealth, but was widely recognized for his accomplishment. After the publication of his biography in 1870, the State Legislature gave him a pension, which eventually totaled $9,600 over six years. This income was supplemented in a small way by selling to curiosity seekers his signed autographs on souvenir cards and by engaging in the communing with spirits, who, he said, gave him useful information he could sell, including where more gold could be found. Marshall was indigent the last eight years of his life, and died in an isolated cabin in 1885.

News Spreads

Toward the end of February, 1848, about a month after Marshall's discovery at Coloma on the American River, Charles Bennett, who had worked at the mill, took some gold to San Francisco and showed it to Isaac Humphrey, an old miner who had come from the hills of Georgia where gold had been extracted in quantity from the 1830s on ward. Humphrey became excited upon seeing the size of the nuggets and expressed his opinion that the Coloma area must be very rich indeed.

The first printed notice of the find is believed to have been in the *Californian*, published by B.R. Buckelew, San Francisco, on March 15, 1848:

> GOLD MINE FOUND. –In the newly made raceway of the Saw Mill recently erected by Captain Sutter, on the American Fork, gold has been found in considerable quantities. One person brought 30 dollars worth to New Helvetia, gathered there in a short time. California, no doubt, so rich in mineral wealth; great chances here for scientific capitalists. Gold has been found in almost every part of the country.

On March 25, the *California Star* published an account that gold dust was being traded at Sutter's Fort, although specific details were lacking. E.C. Kemble, editor of the *Star*, decided to visit Sutter and see for himself, but he must have been hoodwinked by his host, for he returned to San Francisco to print an item that the whole matter was a hoax. Throughout the first several months, Sutter sought to downplay the discovery so that his sawmill could be put into operation and his business could be conducted as usual. As Sutter himself later recalled, he sensed no advantage whatever from strangers swarming over his property to look for gold.

As the weeks went on, real gold, and in large quantities, was brought by miners into San Francisco, laying to rest any question as to what was being found in the streams of the Sierra foothills. The search spread up and down the landscape from the American River, and dust and nuggets were

[1] See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 103 ff., for information about Sutter in later years. [illegible], used by Bancroft, is from the manuscript of Sutter's [illegible], pp. 195-196.

[2] E.S. Capron, *History of California*, 1854, p. 18[illegible].

[3] Mrs. D.B. Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water, or Four Years on the Pacific Coast*, 1857, includes several separate descriptions of his warm greetings to travelers and curiosity seekers.

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, p. 104: "As a matter of fact the Swiss had nothing whatever to complain of. He was his own greatest enemy. His [illegible] of the gold were greatly exaggerated.... [illegible] to say respectable would it have been had he [illegible] some small portion of the fruit of his labors or of good fortune instead of spending his old age complaining and importuning the government for alms...."

found just about everywhere in streams and tributaries. It was thought that the metal had washed down from a vast reserve somewhere high in the mountains, known as the Mother Lode. While no mountains of gold were ever found, many deposits of gold-bearing sand, gravel, and rock were successfully explored.

Off to the Mines!

On May 1, the *Californian* newspaper closed its doors, as all the employees had headed for the Sierras, noting in farewell:

> The whole country, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and from the seashore to the base of the Sierra Nevada, resounds with the sordid cry of, gold! Gold! GOLD!–while the field is left half planted, the house half built, and everything neglected but the manufacture of picks and shovels and the method of transportation to the spot where a man obtained $125 worth of the real stuff in one day's washing, and the average for all concerned was $20 per diem.

The story was much the same elsewhere. Within the next few months, carpenters laid down their tools, cooks discarded their ladles, shopkeepers locked their doors and their clerks had already said good-bye, soldiers deserted their companies, ranchers departed and their livestock ran wild, and all kinds of tradesmen went to the "diggins."

The story was told of a captain who arrived in port about this time and was escorted into the harbor by a pilot ship, as per the practice at the time.[1] The skipper of the pilot told the captain and officers about the gold discoveries. The ship was anchored off the dock, awaiting the next morning when it would proceed to be tied up and unloaded. The next morning the captain awoke, only to find that there was not a soul on board. To a man, the officers and crew had deserted! The pilot suggested to the captain that the ship be left at anchor, as there would be no one to unload her if she docked, and that the captain would do well "to make a journey to the mines himself."

Larkin's Report to Washington

On June 1, 1848, Thomas O. Larkin sent a letter from San Francisco to James Buchanan, then secretary of state in Washington, telling of the discovery, noting in part:[2]

> I have to report to the State Department one of the most astonishing excitements and state of affairs now existing in this country, that, perhaps, has ever been brought to the notice of the government. On the American Fork of the Sacramento and Feather River, another branch of the same, and the adjoining lands, there has been, within the present year, discovered a placer, a vast tract of land containing gold in small particles.
>
> This gold, thus far, has been taken on the bank of the river, from the surface to 18 inches in depth, and is supposed deeper, and to extend over the country. On account of the inconvenience of washing, the people have, to this time, only gathered the metal on the banks, which is done simply with a shovel, filling a shallow dish, bowl, basket, or tin pan with a quantity of black sand, similar to the class used on paper,[3] and washing out the sand by movement of the vessel.
>
> It is now two or three weeks since the men employed in those washings have appeared in this town with gold, to exchange for merchandise and provisions....

Two adventurers are engaged in panning for gold in a stream in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, perhaps along the American River. One partner holds a basket filled with excavated gravel, while the other washes the sand and small stones by swirling them in a circular pan. With luck some "color" would remain at the bottom, perhaps a few grains of gold dust or even a nugget. Panning for gold was a strenuous operation, and to spread the work and gain efficiency most miners formed into larger groups to operate mechanical devices such as rockers and long toms. (*Marvels of the New West*)

Larkin went on to relate that by that time about $20,000 worth of metal had been received in San Francisco, and several hundred men had decamped for the Sierras.

The exodus continued, and soon most boarding houses and tenements were vacant. It was said that $10 to $50 per day could be earned in the gold fields, against perhaps one-tenth that amount working at a trade or profession in San Francisco. The federal bark *Anita* had been deserted by all but six of its crew.

On June 28, Larkin again wrote to Buchanan, advising that he had visited the gold district in person, that about 2,000 miners were at work over hundreds of square miles of territory, that the average miner had found about one ounce of metal per day, and that a team of eight miners was

[1] Thomas W. Knox, *Underground or Life Below the Surface*, 1875, pp. 793-794.

[2] Letter text reproduced in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, pp. 41-42.

[3] At the time it was the practice to sprinkle fine grains of sand on letters and documents written in ink, to absorb the excess liquid and to facilitate drying; the sand was then brushed off.

able to extract about two pounds (24 troy ounces) of gold per day.[1] Presciently, Larkin suggested:

> Should the richness of the gold regions continue, our emigration in 1849 will be many thousands, and in 1850 still more. If our countrymen in California as clerks, mechanics, and workmen will forsake employment at from $2 to $6 per day, how many more of the same class in the Atlantic states, earning much less, will leave for this country under such prospects?

Before long it was estimated that three-fourths of the houses in San Francisco were empty. At the coastal settlement of Monterey, the same thing happened. Word continued to spread, and many who had come across the Oregon Trail to settle in Oregon a few years earlier, now decided that California offered better prospects, at least for short-term profits. Families were left to tend farms, while men rode several hundred miles south to the Sierra foothills. Mormon soldiers returning from the War with Mexico learned of the gold strike, and hundreds tried their luck, including at the pioneering location of Mormon Bar, an island of sand which was among the earlier sites to yield a fortune. From Polynesia and the Sandwich Islands, boat crews coming into San Francisco learned of potential fortunes to be made, and deserted their ships.

Mason Describes His Visit to the Mines

On August 17, 1848, Col. Richard B. Mason, Jr., commanding officer of the United States forces in California and acting governor, wrote, in part:[2]

> I have the honor to inform you that, accompanied by Lieutenant W.T. Sherman, 3rd Artillery, acting assistant adjutant general, I started on the 12th of June last to make a tour through the northern part of California. My principal purpose, however, was to visit the newly discovered gold placer in the valley of the Sacramento....
>
> [After a delay that necessitated my return, I resumed the trip] on the 5th [of July] and proceeded 25 miles up the American Fork, to a point on it now known as the lower mines, or Mormon diggings. The hillsides were thickly strewn with canvas tents and bush arbors. A store was erected, and several boarding shanties in operation. The day was intensely hot, yet about 200 men were at work in the full glare of the sun, washing for gold, some with tin pans, some with close-woven Indian baskets, but the greater part had a rude machine known as a cradle. This is on rockers six or eight feet long, open at the foot, and at its head has a coarse grate and sieve; the bottom is rounded, with small cleats nailed across. Four men are required to work this machine; one digs the gravel in the bank close by the stream, another carries it to the cradle and empties it on the grate, a third gives a violent rocking to the machine, whilst a fourth dashes water on from the stream itself. [Here follows a detailed discussion of various sites, amounts of gold found, etc.] The placer gold is now substituted as currency of this country. In trade it passes freely at $16 per ounce; as an article of commerce its value is not yet fixed....

At the time, communications with the east involved months of travel. There were no telegraph lines in the gold districts, and most of the terrain from the Sierras in California to St. Louis on the Mississippi River in Missouri was wilderness. Thus, it was not until September 20, 1848, that the first account of importance concerning the gold strike was published in the East, a notice in the *Baltimore Sun*. Meanwhile, and continuing for months afterward, many accounts were dispatched by mail from San Francisco to relatives and friends.

The news continued to spread, and each account reaching the East Coast inflamed the passion of those who read it. California became a magnet the likes of which America had never known. In 1848 most adventurers departed by sea from the Atlantic states, as neither late summer, autumn, nor winter were propitious times to begin an overland journey. Those who did want to go by wagon bided their time by forming companies, gathering supplies, reading all they could find about gold mining—just waiting until the weather became warm in the spring of the following year.

Conditions in San Francisco

Throughout 1848, extending into 1849, travel to San Francisco by sea was often a one-way proposition. The crews, once ashore, quickly disappeared. Several hundred vessels lay derelict in the harbor, rising to an estimated peak of 500 by July 1850.[3] Some rotted and sank with their holds full of now useless goods, others were split apart for their lumber, and still others were left idle. A few were berthed and converted to commercial storage warehouses.

Word spread further, and in autumn 1848 newspapers in the East ran many articles on the alluring prospect of becoming rich overnight. In November 1848 several ships left the East to go to San Francisco. By December a veritable stampede was in progress. Old schooners, transport steamers, and virtually any other vessels considered even remotely seaworthy were pressed into service. Between December 14, 1848, and January 1849, 61 ships with an average of 50 passengers each left Boston, Salem, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Norfolk. Additional vessels left from Charleston, New Orleans, and other ports. Still, the "rush" was yet to come.

Meanwhile, consumer goods became very scarce in 1848.

1 Letter text reproduced in [illegible]. [illegible] was also printed as House Executive Document [illegible], 30th Congress, 2nd Session.

2 Letter addressed to General R. Jones, adjutant general U.S.A., in Washington, DC. Letter text reproduced in [illegible] this was also printed as House Executive Document [illegible], 31st Congress, 1st Session. [illegible]

3 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII: 1860-1890, p. 125.

Rocker device in use in the California gold fields, similar to the "cradle" described by Col. Richard B. Mason, Jr., in his letter of August 17, 1848: "This is on rockers six or eight feet long, open at the foot, and at its head has a coarse grate and sieve; the bottom is rounded, with small cleats nailed across. Four men are required to work this machine; one digs the gravel in the bank close by the stream, another carries it to the cradle and empties it on the grate, a third gives a violent rocking to the machine, whilst a fourth dashes water on from the stream itself." (*Progress of the United States*)

Many stories later reached print relating that eggs were selling for a dollar or more each as were chickens, and that $10 to $20 had to be paid for items normally worth a tiny fraction of that. Indeed, this was true, but only for a short time in San Francisco's history. By the summer of 1849, most previously scarce goods were abundant in the city, although scarcity continued in some of the distant mining areas.

The year 1849 saw a vast influx by land and sea into California. Tens of thousands of newcomers swarmed across the land. Many went directly to the gold fields and established settlements ranging from a few tents to entire towns. Others sought their fortunes in the big city, that being San Francisco, where there were more ways to make money than by panning for gold.

However, by autumn 1849 thousands of disappointed fortune seekers returned from the mines, and others came back who were simply homesick. A counter-tide began to flow, even if in a small way, back to the East. Within the next several months crews were formed, vessels were repaired and provisioned, and the number of ships exiting the harbor far exceeded those coming in. Others remained in San Francisco.

A Special $2.50 Gold Coin

In his annual address to Congress in December 1848, President James Knox Polk mentioned gold. Reality was on hand in the form of the first deposit made of metal from the American River district of California, brought by David Garter on December 8. Mint Director Robert M. Patterson reported in due course that the gold, amounting to 1,804.59 ounces, assayed slightly over $18 per ounce.

On December 9th, the following day, 228 ounces of gold averaging .894 fine were deposited at the Philadelphia Mint from a shipment forwarded by Col. R. B. Mason, Jr., in California. This unrefined metal had been purchased at the bargain rate of $10 per ounce (pure gold was worth $17.15 net per ounce at the Mint) by an army quartermaster in California under the sanction of the acting governor, using money from a civil fund. This gold was transmitted from California with a letter dated August 17, 1848, via a

messenger, Lt. L. Loeser, who transported it in a tea caddy, or, less romantically, perhaps an old oyster can.[1] When Loeser arrived at the trading port of New Orleans on November 24th on his way to Washington, the *Commercial Times* of that city printed an account which attracted wide interest among citizens. The gold fever continued to spread.

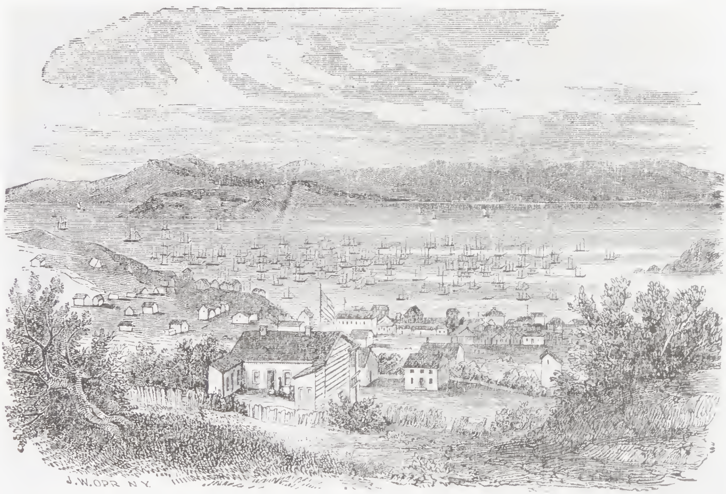
When Lt. Loeser subsequently arrived in the capital, *The Washington Union* informed readers:

> We readily admit that the account so nearly approached the miraculous that we were relieved by the evidence of our own senses on the subject. The specimens have all the appearance of the native gold we had seen from the mines of North Carolina and Virginia; and we are informed that the Secretary will send the small chest of gold to the Mint, to be melted into coin and bars, and most of it to be subsequently fashioned into medals commemorative of the heroism and valor of our officers.
>
> Several of the other specimens he will retain for the present in the War Office as found in California in the form of lumps, scales, and sand; the last named being of different hues, from bright yellow to black, without much appearance of gold. However skeptical any man may have been, we defy him to doubt that if the quantity of such specimens as these be as great as has been represented, the value of gold in California must be greater than has been hitherto discovered in the old or new continent; and great as may be the immigration to this new El Dorado, the frugal and industrious will be amply repaid for their enterprise and toil.

After seeing the Loeser treasure of 228 ounces of gold, Secretary of War W.L. Marcy, based in Washington, wrote the following to Mint Director Patterson on December 8, 1848, concerning the metal, which subsequently arrived in Philadelphia via the same courier on December 9th:

> If the metal is found to be pure gold, as I doubt not that it will be, I request you to reserve enough of it for two medals ordered by Congress and not yet completed, and the remainder, with the exception of one or two small bars, I wish to have coined and sent with the bars to this department. As many may wish to procure specimens made with California gold, by exchanging other coin for it, I would suggest that it be made into quarter eagles with a distinguishing mark on each,

[1] The tea caddy has been accepted by most historians. However, William T. Sherman in his *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 58, suggests "an oyster can full." • "A small chest called a caddy" (nothing about *tea*) commented the *Washington Union* (as quoted in *Niles' Register*, LXIV, p. 336). • At an early date, details of the Gold Rush began to vary widely, and as years passed, facts became fewer and theories became more numerous. Perhaps nowhere else in American history can one review a certain set of accounts and come to conclusions completely different from what would arise if another set of accounts had been consulted. Bancroft seems eminently fair by citing multiple, often conflicting accounts for much of his narrative.



San Francisco as it appeared in early 1849. The city was in its first full year of gold-fueled growth, the harbor had not been filled in yet, and riding at anchor were many derelict vessels that had been abandoned by their crews. (*Beyond the Mississippi*)

> if any variation from the ordinary issues from the Mint would be proper and could be conveniently made....

Nothing was heard from the Mint, and Marcy inquired concerning the progress of the coinage. On January 5, 1849, Mint Director Robert Maskell Patterson replied:[1]

> The amount of your deposit of gold, made on the 15th ult., is now ready for delivery in California gold. It is our practice to pay for deposits as soon as their value is ascertained; but this could not be done in the present case because payment was required in coins made of the bullion deposited. Before the Cal. gold could be used it had to undergo the process of *parting* in order to separate it from the excess of silver which it contains. This was one source of delay. Another occurred by the time required for stamping the letters CAL. on the quarter eagles as you desired. Your payment of $3,910.10 will be made up of $3,474.64 in coins and $435.46 in two bars of gold as melted from the grains. The California gold reserved for the medals is from another deposit....

At the time the smallest United States gold coin was the $2.50 piece, popularly known as the quarter eagle. The 1,389 quarter eagles from the first significant government deposit of this precious metal from California bore the notation CAL. on the reverse, thus making them the first commemorative coins ever issued by a United States mint. Without a doubt these are true commemoratives, as the above government correspondence indicates that the pieces were to have been made to satisfy those seeking a souvenir coin specifically made from Gold Rush treasure. By this step, the California discovery became a vital part of American numismatics.

Early Accounts Regarding the Gold Country

The following early letters describe the scene in the first year after the discovery was revealed:

M.T. McClellan wrote this glowing account from San Francisco October 18, 1848:[2]

> I take this, the earliest opportunity, to inform you of my [illegible]. I found California in another revolution, not of [illegible] of gold.... We arrived at Weaver's Creek, a branch of the American fork of the Sacramento River, where my family [illegible], a [illegible], and perilous journey [illegible] months and five days, thank Providence,

1848 gold $2.50 coin counterstamped "CAL." above the eagle on the reverse. This is one of 1,389 pieces struck from the government deposit of California gold made at the Philadelphia Mint in December of the same year. Specifically produced as a souvenir, the 1848 CAL. quarter eagle is America's first commemorative coin. (Rarities Sale, August 1998)

> without loss or injury.... I brought every species of property I started with, which is worth more here in gold than all I was ever worth put together in my life. I sold, when I landed in the mines, the wagon I bought at Oldham, and three yoke of oxen, for $1,000 in gold, and was offered $1,200 for another wagon and oxen, but I would not sell it; it is worth as much to me as a steamboat is to its owner on the Missouri River.... I sold off all my horses--three at $100 apiece, the common price for horses and mules varies from one to four hundred dollars per head....
>
> Now, let me give you an account of these mines. They are scattered over an area of from 500 to 1,000 miles, the richest ever known upon earth. The average calculation for the amount [earned, including by] Indians, Mexicans, runaway sailors, disbanded soldiers, Conacers from the islands,[3] and men and monsters, is $16 per day.... My little girls can make from $5 to $25 per day washing gold in pans. So soon as we get ready I expect to ship at this port for Jackson County, Missouri, where I expect to spend the balance of my days in peace and quietness and in the enjoyment of family and friends, where of all places I most delight to be. My average income this winter will be $150, and if I should strike a good lead it will be a great deal more. The vast majority of the persons who have done well here in the mines are going back to the states to live, at least nine out of ten....
>
> Old Captain Sutter has rented out his Fort to merchants, tavern keepers, grocery keepers, etc., at the rate of $50,000 per year, besides there are floating stores at the [Sacramento City] landing in launches, brigs, etc.

Franklin A. Buck, a young man who had left his family home in Bucksport, Maine, to seek his fortune in a wider world, wrote letters to his sister Mary who remained back home.[4] This one is from New York City, December 2, 1848. Their father had just sold his house in Maine and announced he was going to move to Lynn, Massachusetts, a busy industrial center:

> No other place he can go to will ever seem like home. But, if he can do better to emigrate, I say go, but while he is about it he had better go to California. Have you read the account from there about the gold? There is no *humbug* about it. I have seen letters from captains whom I know, who write that their men have all run away and are digging up $20 a day, PURE GOLD, for some of it has been sent home. It has created a real fever here. Two steamships sailed yesterday for California. Several young men of my acquaintance are going out and you need not be at all surprised to hear of my going....

Another letter from Buck, still in New York City, on December 17, 1848:[5]

[1] Patterson served as director of the Mint from July 1835 until July 1851. At that time, all business relating to coinage at the several mints (Philadelphia and its branches at Charlotte, Dahlonega, and New Orleans) was usually tended to by the director in Philadelphia, often with the advice and consent of the secretary of the Treasury in Washington, DC.

[2] Quoted by Walker D. Wyman, *California Emigrant Letters*, 1952, pp. 23-25.

[3] Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands).

[4] *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush*, pp. 24-25.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29.

I have seen letters from the son of Secretary Marcy[1] to a friend in the city. A.G. has received letters from his agent. Uncle Richard has had letters from captains he sent out and also from two young men who took out goods last spring. These young men have made $40,000, and one of them is coming home with it. A.G.'s agent, Bob Parker (you know him) writes that he has sold out his goods at an enormous profit. He kept one man constantly weighing gold dust and he has $100,000 on hand and was going down to Mazatlan to exchange it for coin.[2]

Young Marcy writes that he did not believe it at San Francisco and went up to the mines to see for himself. He saw them washing out the gold in tin pans and digging it up with sheath knives. One man got $4,000 in one day, but the most of them about $50 to $100 per day.... Great quantities have been sent here to the banks and Mint.... Look out on the docks and you will see from 20 to 30 ships loading with all kinds of merchandise and filling up with passengers...leaving good situations and fitting themselves out with arms and ammunition, tents, provisions, and mining implements....

A further letter from Buck, who remained in New York City, but not for long, to sister Mary on January 3, 1849:[3]

...I called on all my friends Monday, but could not bid any of them a serious farewell as the girls would not believe that I am going. Although, my dear sister, you are not here to pack me off, I am not altogether forgotten by your sex. The girls have met at Frank Pond's and had a sewing bee and presented to each of us [Buck and his companions], on New Year's Day, with a Bachelor's Companion—a long bag to roll up, containing needles, thread, scissors, buttons, etc. A very nice affair, gotten up with good taste and very acceptable. They are evidently laying an anchor to windward and want some of the *dust*. You probably know by Father's letter that I am going around the Horn with [our uncle,] Captain [Richard] Cole....

I shall purchase 100 volumes of books, at least, and exchange my French for Spanish and learn that on the voyage. It is a long time to be at sea, four and a half [months] at least....

Another adventurer, William Morford, included this in a letter he wrote in San Francisco on January 6, 1849:[4]

Upon our arrival at Monterey [on the coast south of San Francisco] we heard of the gold mines, and emblazoned as the accounts were, they at once gave me the idea of seeking my fortune among them. After our arrival in San Francisco, most of our men, including the cook and steward, ran away from us. The captain then begged the residue to stay by the ship until she was discharged and then he would give us clear[5] or double our wages. However, the remainder left except D—, the sailmaker, and myself. [However, after a dispute with the captain] I took French leave for the mines.... I arrived at Sutter's Fort on the Sacramento River. I then proceeded on horseback (Captain Sutter having given me a mustang) to the North Fork on the Rio Americano. I worked about 11 days, averaging about $104 per day....

[I returned to San Francisco and obtained a] situation with Messrs. Cross, Hobson & Co., extensive merchants here, with a salary of $150 per month, and board. Board is $20 a week; indeed, everything is at an enormous price at present. I still remain with them, but as soon as I can collect money enough I will return home, for I can live much better on $30 a month in New York than here at $150. Then, there is no society here: it is 10 times worse than Wisconsin; with gamblers innumerable, and the Spanish gamblers will murder you with a good will for your clothes and blankets. You may judge the state of society, also, by a great part of it being composed of disbanded soldiers and runaway soldiers....

A gold seeker identifying himself as "V.J.F." wrote this from San Francisco, April 6, 1849:[6]

The mining season has just opened. Every vessel for Sacramento and San Joaquin is crowded with passengers. Vessels drawing up to seven feet can go up to Sutter's old fort....

Most of the vessels in port have been entirely abandoned by their crews. As soon as the *California* arrived, every man, except the captain and one or two others deserted. When the steamer *Oregon* came in sight of San Francisco, the men on board refused to do duty. Several swam ashore, others were put in confinement. The United States ship *Ohio* has lost several of her sailors; there has, also, been a mutiny aboard that vessel....

San Francisco, the point of rendezvous, presents a strange aspect. The streets are crowded with people of all nations. Every house, every shanty, every tent is full. Auctioneers and merchants are busy.[7] However, the price of goods, of every description, is falling rapidly, and it is feared that the market will soon be glutted. It is believed that heavy losses will be sustained by those sending or bringing in cargoes from abroad.[8] The market is exceedingly fluctuating. Hams which sold for more than $1 per pound at auction three months ago, were sold last week at 27¢; brandy, which brought $8 per gallon, was sold lately for $2; blankets, for which we gave $50 per pair in the month of December, were sold a few days ago for $5.... There are many things, however, which still command an exorbitant price, and among them I will cite lumber, which sells now for $600 per 1,000 feet!...

Overland to the Gold Fields

The floodgates to the golden West burst in 1849. In the Midwest in Missouri, at St. Louis, St. Joseph, and Independence, large companies of adventurers gathered in the spring

1 U.S. Secretary of War W.L. Marcy, who sent the first *official* shipment of gold from California to the Mint; earlier noticed in the present chapter in relation to the 1848 CAL. $2.50 gold commemorative coins.

2 Coins of any kind were scarce in San Francisco, but those that did circulate were apt to be Spanish American issues. In contrast, Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, was a long-established city with banks, bullion dealers, etc., and had no known coin shortage at the time.

3 *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush*, pp. 29-30. Dozens of later letters described his life and commercial success as a businessman in California, which he *finally* reached on August 6, 1849, after an especially long voyage delayed by headwinds off the west coast of South America, which sometimes had them "losing ground every day" (letter of August 28, 1849, from San Francisco).

4 Quoted by Walker D. Wyman, *California Emigrant Letters*, 1952, pp. [illegible].

5 A clearance or release from any further contractual obligation to work on the ship; thus cleared, a sailor was free to go wherever he wished.

6 Quoted by Walker D. Wyman, *California Emigrant Letters*, 1952, pp. 22-25, continued on pp. 141-142.

7 The standard way to sell goods brought in quantity into the port of San Francisco (the same practice was used in New York, New Orleans, etc.) was to consign the items to an auctioneer, who would then advertise and conduct a sale.

8 "Abroad" meant anywhere outside of the port, including the eastern United States.

to form wagon trains, often with hundreds of people, to make the journey across the plains during the warmer months of the year. Guidebooks were published; glowing accounts were printed, embellished, and reprinted; and ideas were expressed as to the best way to go. While Lewis and Clark had explored the route to Oregon and the Northwest in 1804-1806 and thousands had later traveled the Oregon Trail, the paths and roads to California were less well known, particularly for the Great American Desert to the west of the Mormon settlement at Great Salt Lake.

With great expectations, single men as well as families heaped their wagons high with provisions, furniture, stoves, and even the occasional piano or harmonium. Shares in travel companies were issued, elaborate rules of conduct were formulated, charters and constitutions were written, and in many instances officers were elected.

Some partnerships such as the Cincinnati Mining & Trading Co., organized in the city of the same name in 1849, seem to have taken metal refining and coining equipment to the West.

A newspaper account published in May of that year stated that a group had "gone from Northampton, Mass., taking with them a mint, or, rather, all the implements necessary for coining gold and silver, and a competent assayer." [1] It was related that the mint of the Massachusetts & California Company would have a capacity of striking $10,000 worth of coins per day.

It is not known today whether the few gold coins known with imprints of these two companies were made as patterns in the East, or if coinage actually took place in California.[2]

The Pelican Company, organized in New Orleans in 1849, contemplated a coinage of $2.50, $5, and $10 gold coins in California, and prepared a broadside with the endorsements of certain officials of the New Orleans Mint.[3] Similarly, it is not known today if their plans ever materialized.

Other travelers took heavy mechanical "gold washing machines," which manufacturers in the East built for enthusiastic customers who wanted to strike it rich with little work once they reached California. Others took stoves, agricultural tools, refining equipment, and other heavy things.

Reality often fell far short of expectations, travel proved to be very arduous, and many people died along the way from cholera, attacks by hostile Indians,[4] or from the privations of climate. Cattle strayed or died, water became scarce or was found to be unfit for drinking, and many areas of the route could not be traveled easily. Heavy furniture and equipment and, perhaps, even coin-minting devices had to be discarded. The trail was littered with sick and dying horses, cows, and oxen, and hundreds of little stone piles and markers memorialized unfortunate pioneer children and adults who died along the way. Sometimes those in early wagon trains burned the grass along the route to hamper their competition and make them turn back. Human emotions and actions ranged from the saintly and heroic to the despicable. Human nature was at its best and its worst. The year 1849 was particularly difficult for just about everyone who went overland.

During the following year, 1850, there were occasional traders and merchants set up along the overland route, the best places to avoid including deadly "shortcuts" were known, and travelers had fewer casualties. There was also a two-way traffic, with some wagons headed back to the East. These returning travelers were helpful in pointing out conditions ahead, such as the availability of grass and good water and the passability of the trail.

The *Alta California*, October 6, 1850, printed this letter from the gold region not far from the Nevada border, telling of westward travelers whom he had witnessed at the California end of the overland trip in that year:[5]

> Immigrants still pass in great numbers and many of them are apparently in distress, being compelled to walk and carry

Wagons headed west to California by the thousands in 1849, departing from Missouri in the spring and early summer so as to travel during the warmer season. Ahead was a long, arduous journey fraught with many dangers and deprivations. Many gold seekers never completed the trip to the Golden West, but perished along the trail. Included among the travelers headed toward the sunset were a few partnerships which hoped to profit by minting gold coins once their wagons arrived in San Francisco. Other would-be coiners came by ship around Cape Horn. Enthusiasm and good intentions notwithstanding, most such golden dreams never came to pass, and today certain issuers as the Cincinnati Mining & Trading Co., the Pelican Co., and the Massachusetts & California Co. are remembered only by a handful of specimens or pattern strikings. (*Marvels of the New West*)

[1] Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California, 1849-55*, p. 68; name and date of newspaper not given.

[2] No doubt an assay would reveal which. If made from California gold, such pieces would have a significant percentage of *silver* as an "impurity."

[3] Illustrated in Donald H. Kagin, *Private Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States*, 1981, p. 82.

[4] The Mountain Meadow Massacre near Salt Lake City was particularly noted as this was organized by a renegade group of Mormons and carried into effect by the Indians. Mark Twain, among others, wrote extensively concerning it.

[5] Citation located by Dan Owens.

their blankets, cooking utensils and provisions. Much sickness prevails about 50 miles back, this side of the 40 mile desert, and many are dying of a disease something like cholera, brought on by living on fresh beef alone, and bad water, in crossing the desert. This desert, it appears, is the hardest part of the route. Before reaching the desert, grass had to be carried 30 miles—40 miles more makes the distance traveled without pasture 70 miles. The water for this distance is worse than none at all. Here the animals give out, and the immigrants begin to throw sheet iron stoves, shovels, picks, pans, clothing, etc., from their wagons ...

Were it not for the traders who have flocked to the desert with supplies, many more would have died. With fresh teams, the traders are taking grass and water into the desert, and gathering up the animals and wagons they find deserted.... A man who came through late counted 1,500 graves along the road. This morning I saw a lady from Pennsylvania on the road, nearly 60 years old. She said she had grandchildren in the States, and was opposed to leaving them; but her old man almost always would have his own way.

"Indeed," said she, "I had no peace or quietness at home, until I would consent to come. We had a good team, and I thought we traveled over prairie all the way; but it's been nothing but thump, thump, thump, for the last five months; and I'm heartily sick and tired of it. But the old man would not take my advice, and now he's sorry for it, and as cross as the mischief." Many of those arriving, I find, had no idea on so long a journey....

Yours truly, R. Wilson.

To California by Sea

Other "Forty-Niners," as the adventurers came to be called, went by sea, either by ship to Panama, crossing land at the isthmus, and connecting with another ship on the Pacific Side, or without transfer on a ship that went around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. In the early days, ocean travel either way was difficult. Facilities were crowded aboard ship, agents often sold more tickets than there were berths available, food was poor, and the vessels were often unsafe. As passenger traffic increased, the accommodations went from poor to miserable to positively wretched, except for those who paid a premium and secured one of the few first- or second-class cabins available.

A popular itinerary was to take a ship from an eastern port to New York City or New Orleans, and from those ports to board a sailing ship or steamer to the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama, although the crossing at Nicaragua later became popular.

On the Panama land crossing, disease, poor roads, and greedy local porters and other tradespeople made conditions miserable. Just about everyone who kept a diary later wrote accounts of the travails found in Panama. Unlike overland travelers who were too busy jouncing around in wagons or looking for food, the typical traveler by sea had lots of time to kill. Accordingly, many journals were written by seafarers, or *argonauts* as they were called, often containing widely varying accounts of the same voyage, depending upon the class of service used.[1]

Travails of travelers on the trail to El Dorado. Dead horses, broken wagons, and other problems attended emigrants on the overland route to the West, particularly in the desert areas of Utah and Nevada. Many who started out with high hopes and filled wagons completed the journey on foot. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

Tickets for through passage to San Francisco were bought at the eastern ports. However, it was the rule, not the exception, in the early days that delays occurred during the Panama land crossing, and ship connections on the Pacific side to continue to San Francisco were often delayed, erratic, or sometimes canceled altogether. Consternation reigned from Panama onward, and many were the travelers who had to stay for *weeks* in that humid, semi-wild tropical region awaiting passage westward.

It was not until 1850 that one could travel from East to West by sailing ship or steamer and experience any semblance of civilized accommodations. Even then, there were many unusual, indeed frightening situations aboard ship, what with professional thieves and gamblers often preying on passengers and with the travelers composed of people from all walks of life, from high society to escaped convicts and derelicts.

Types of Mining

Arriving in California, the would be miner quickly found that the ways of finding gold were several. The basic way employed by many fortune seekers was to swirl a mixture of sand, gravel, and water in round pans, hoping to catch some gold dust or nuggets, called "color," at the bottom. This was essentially a one-man operation and could be carried on at any place with a supply of water on hand. Sometimes

[1] Argonauts were so called after Jason of mythology who sailed aboard the Argo in quest of the Golden Fleece. Mythological tradition notwithstanding, sometimes travelers by *land* were also called argonauts, and some modern dictionary entries reflect this misuse.

a pocket knife or blade could be employed to pick away at a gravel bank, exposing gleaming yellow nuggets. Such methods often yielded about an ounce of gold per day to the industrious, although greater and lesser realizations were common.

Teams of six to eight men were organized by some gold seekers, and *long toms* were built, these being long wooden and metal chutes into which gravel and water were fed at the top and sorted by riffles and screens at the bottom. Often, large embankments were dug out and run through long toms. A smaller device called a *cradle* could be worked by three or four industrious miners, and involved rocking the machine back and forth to sort and sift gravel and sand.

Sand bars in the American and Feather rivers and their tributaries often yielded large amounts of dust and nuggets that had washed down from higher elevations in primordial times. Such river deposits of many acres were often staked out and a city of tents erected in the area, the aforementioned Mormon Bar being but one of many such areas.

After the easy pickings were worked out, entire rivers were dammed and diverted so that their beds could be excavated. Eventually, high-pressure hoses called *monitors* directed intense streams of water against hillsides, often vastly altering the topography. In other instances, ditches were dug, often by a company financed by many different miners, and quantities of water were diverted to previously dry land, permitting easy processing of dirt and gravel.

In particularly arid areas lacking nearby water for sorting gold from soil and gravel, the *arrastre* was a fixture, this consisting of a device with heavy flat-bottomed stones that were dragged around a center post by a horse or mule, crushing gravel and small stones below it. In other instances, winnowing was employed, whereby in a rather messy procedure dirt was thrown into the air, and heavier gold nuggets were seen as they fell onto a blanket or tarp.

Crushed gravel or dirt containing gold dust was often treated by mercury (popularly known as quicksilver), a metal molten at room temperature, to which gold readily adhered. Later, the mercury would be driven off by heating the gold-mercury metal in a retort. Gold obtained by the mercury process was not as desirable on the market as "pure" metal processed in other ways, and sold for a dollar or two less per ounce. Mercury was found in quantity in California, particularly at New Almaden, and could be extracted easily

Hydraulic mining for gold by the use of high-pressure hoses called monitors. By this process, entire hillsides were often washed away. Gold dust and nuggets were recovered from the outflow of water. (*Progress of the United States*)

by heating high-grade ore in a retort and precipitating the metal from the fumes.

By the late 1850s most placer deposits in the Sierra foothills had been washed out, the era of the individual fortune-seeker joined by a small group of partners was largely past, and most gold was extracted by mining corporations.[1] Such companies typically sunk vertical or horizontal shafts into the soil until a vein of gold-bearing quartz was found. The rock would be blasted into chunks and removed by hoisted barrels or in small metal cars riding on rails. Nearby, a reduction facility equipped with immense water- or steam-powered iron stamp mills would pound the quartz rock into dust, after which gold could be extracted by the use of mercury or acid.

In 1865, a heavy quartz stamp mill is said to have been aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, on its way to Oregon to be transshipped to newly opened gold fields in the Owyhee District of southern Idaho. By that time, hundreds of such mills were running in California and were being manufactured in San Francisco by several different iron foundries.

In the Mining Camps

Dozens of little settlements sprung up in the foothills, some to disappear within a year or two leaving hardly a trace. The spirit and hardship of the time were reflected in such place names as Hangtown (later called Placerville), Skunk Gulch, Gitup and Git, Lousy Ravine, Wild Goose Flat, Brandy Gulch, Guano Hill, Whisky Bar, Puke Ravine, and Gouge Eye.

Mormon Bar, Christian Flat, French Corral, Dutch Flat, Negro Hill, Indian Flat, and Chinese Camp indicated the ethnic or religious makeup of those in residence. Bret Harte, an *S.S. Brother Jonathan* passenger in 1854, went on to write a curious tale with a fictitious, but realistic sounding mining settlement name, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat."

Women were in the distinct minority in the mountain camps, and it was not unusual for the ratio of males to females to approach 10 to one. At dances, men would often dance with each other. The young lady who was durable enough to take up prostitution in a saloon probably earned more than most miners. Often the *sight* of a woman was a memorable event, as in this account:[2]

> A lady told me that she was the first who arrived at Cañon Creek, situated a hundred miles above Marysville, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and that when she arrived at the top of the mountain which overlooked the ravine in which the miners were at work, they desisted from their labors, gave three hearty cheers, and came to the place where she was seated on a mule. Their delight was so great at seeing a live woman in their midst, that they actually lifted the mule upon which she was riding from his feet, and carried them both down the mountain. Those miners had lived so long in their little cabins, secluded from the world, deprived of the cheering presence of woman, knew then, if they had never before known, how to appreciate the opposite sex.

This account was printed in the *Sacramento Transcript*, June 18, 1850:[3]

> MORE LADIES: A Sydney ship arrived yesterday morning, having on board 260 passengers of whom, over 70 were females! There was quite a rush of bachelors to the Bay all the forenoon–whole boat loads of them climbing the ship's sides, trying to engage housekeepers.

One historian described the usual male inhabitant:[4]

> The typical miner was a large, strong, and physically perfect man, with long hair and uncut beard, a slouch hat, woolen shirt, coarse pantaloons stuck inside the legs of long, heavy, hobnailed boots and supported at the waist with a leather belt, to which was strung, ready for instant use, a revolver and bowie knife.

In the very early days of the gold camps, honesty and hard work prevailed. Valuables were left unattended in tents and cabins while the owners were at the "diggins." By 1849, many ne'er-do-wells, outlaws, sharpers, and other undesirable men came to the towns to live off whatever spoils they could find. Disaffected miners who found only a few cents' worth of gold in a day, or none at all, became renegades. Prejudices arose, and there were unfortunate incidents against the Chinese, Indians, and others who were not among the "white" immigrants from the East.

Offenders, when caught, were often subjected to justice performed on the spot by angry townspeople, with the sentence being a bullet or rope. However, for every person apprehended, 10 went scot-free.

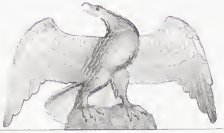
[1] Albert D. Richardson wrote this in *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, pp. 451-452: "The placer mining in California is nearly exhausted. The quartz mining is but just begun. Cheapness of machinery, labor and living give these lodes great advantages over those of more distant regions. Quartz containing $8 or $9 of gold to the ton pays well; while in portions of Nevada, Utah, Montana and Idaho one will not justify working unless $100 can be extracted from each ton. The Pacific railway will partially equalize this, but can never do so fully. In general the California quartz gold is fine and easily worked. Almost half of our mineral product comes from this state."

[2] Mrs. D.B. Bates, *Incidents on Land and Water, or Four Years on the Pacific Coast*, 1857, pp. 217-218.

[3] Citation located by Dan Owens.

[4] Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. II, 1885, p. [illegible]

Chapter Two



San Francisco in the Gold Rush

Wine, Women, and Song

Situated in a large protected harbor, San Francisco became the focal point for commercial and social activity during the Gold Rush. It offered the amenities of moderate climate combined with ready access to interior lands by steamer or wagon. While mining camps in the hills were rustic—one was even called Rough and Ready—the city of San Francisco offered at least some of the trappings of what sojourners had experienced in the culture of the East.

The city underwent transitions on almost a yearly basis, and 1848 was as different from 1849 as 1850 was from 1855 or 1860. Vignettes describing everyday life, business, society, and the physical appearance of the city changed as regularly as stereograph cards in a viewer. An account of the city written by an immigrant in December 1848 would be vastly different from one written a decade later, almost as if there were two San Franciscos, each on a different continent.

Much has been made of the fact that in the early days women were scarce in San Francisco, and many of those that were in town, especially in public places, were apt to have uncertain reputations. Bancroft commented:[1]

> The place of women at dances would be taken by men. In 1850 more women began to come in, although composed largely of loose elements. Numerous came from the East. The preponderance in this class [were] Hispano-Americans, not excepting Californians.... Hundreds were brought from Mazatlan and San Blas on trust, and transferred to bidders with whom the girls shared their earnings. The Peruvians were sought for dancing saloons. Australia sent many. French women were brought out to preside at gambling tables.[2]
>
> "Nine hundred of the French demimonde are expected," announced the *Pacific News*, October 23, 1850, to reside on Stockton and Filbert streets. However, the number dwindled to just 50.... One noted prostitute claimed to have earned $50,000....

Another view of the lack of women in the early days, this comment more oriented toward the family, is provided by Peter H. Burnett, who later became the first governor of the State of California:[3]

> I arrived in San Francisco on Friday, March 23rd [1849]. It was then but a village containing about 1,500 inhabitants. Of them, 15 were women, five or six were children, and the remainder were nearly all young men, *very few* being over 40. It was difficult to find a man with gray hair. I had never seen so strange a state of society until I arrived in California.... To see a community composed almost exclusively of young men engaged in civil pursuits was, indeed, extraordinary.... Women were then queens, and children angels, in California.
>
> Sunday, March 25, 1849, was a bright, genial, beautiful day, and as I was standing in Kearny Street, about 10 a.m., I saw, on the opposite side of Portsmouth Square, two little girls, about seven years old, dressed in pure white. They were about the age of my youngest child, Sallie, and they appeared to be the most lovely objects I had ever seen. How beautiful are innocent children! I had not seen my loved ones for more

1. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 232 ff.

2. C. L. Canfield (editor), *The Diary of a Forty-Niner* [illegible] have been from the diary of Alfred T. Jackson, a [illegible] seeker from Norfolk, CT, who made [illegible] mining in 1850-185[illegible]. He went to Nevada City to [illegible] attracted by the charm of a pretty French [illegible] Centerville, was recognized by her [illegible] him and his partner at their placer diggings [illegible] about. Much to the surprise of [illegible] the beginning of a friendship which [illegible] to marriage, after which the couple [illegible] hopefully (the diary does not continue beyond the California experience) lived happily ever after. (Of course, this would make a [illegible] novel or movie! Today, historians have doubted [illegible] the authenticity of the narrative.)

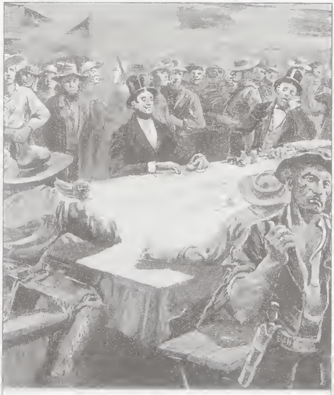
3. Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 1880, pp. 301 ff.

> than six months, and this spectacle went to my heart. I had it from good authority that in the fall of 1849 [*sic*; perhaps 1848 was intended] a beautiful flaxen-haired little girl, about three years old, was often seen playing upon a veranda attached to a house on Clay Street, between Montgomery and Kearny, and that hardy miners might be seen on the opposite side of Clay Street gazing at that lovely child, while manly tears ran down their bronzed cheeks. The sight of that prattling child revived memories of the peaceful, happy houses they had left to hunt for gold on a distant shore....

Burnett went on to remark that goods (which had been very scarce in 1848) were now plentiful:[1]

> Within a few days after my arrival in San Francisco the sailing ships from the East began to arrive, full of gold seekers who were well provided with outfits consisting of clothing, brushes, and other articles, many of which were not much used in the mines. Many of them had much greater supplies than they required, and others were destitute of the means to pay their expenses to the mines. As large objects appear small in the distance, most of these people supposed when they left home that their journey would about end at San Francisco. In this they were mistaken. They had many miles yet to travel, and the expenses of travel in California were much greater in proportion to distance than at home. These people would congregate in and around Portsmouth Square, and you could see many auctions going on at the same time. The owner of the articles to be disposed would turn up a barrel on end, and from his trunks alongside he would draw out his goods and sell them to the highest bidder for gold dust at $16 per ounce, there being little or no coin in the country...

Gold Rush miners returned to San Francisco with their earnings from the Sierra foothills. In the city, mercantile establishments and services expanded, and beginning in a large way in 1849, the economy grew by leaps and bounds. By that time many laborers and professionals who had dropped everything in 1848 to head for the interior regions had returned.



A game of faro in progress. Miners gather around while one, sometimes two, croupiers supervise the proceedings. On the table are piles of coins and small bags of gold dust and nuggets. (*The Discovery of Gold in California*)

By autumn 1849, the city had become very cosmopolitan. Many services and products from the East were readily available, and for reasonable prices. And, while there was not a woman for every man in town—nor would there be for many years—they were no longer novelties except, perhaps, in the distant mining camps and gullies in the foothills of the Sierras.

Saloons and Gambling Halls

Men, often without a family life, found entertainment in the many gambling parlors, saloons, and, eventually, theatres. Gambling in particular was an intense activity in San Francisco. Beckoning were such card games as faro, monte (or monte bank), and twenty-one, plus roulette wheels, guessing games, and other enticements.

Faro, also called "bucking the tiger," a game in which players gathered around a table to place bets on cards as they are revealed, seemed to be easy to win and attracted many amateurs who were unaware of the true odds. Poker was also popular with diehard gamblers. Dilettantes were apt to shy away, believing that it took an expert to win and, more important, it took *time* to play—in contrast to the instant decisions at the roulette table or with twenty-one.[2] Nearly every hotel had gaming tables in the lobby or on the ground floor, and many larger restaurants offered gambling as well.

Hubert Howe Bancroft confirmed that among card games in San Francisco, faro was most popular with Americans and Britons, while those of Latin descent seemed to like monte. In one particularly memorable game of faro, a $16,000 bag of gold was placed as a bet, and the dealer covered it without a moment's hesitation.

The same historian described monte:[3]

> For this game were used Spanish cards, 48 in a pack, the 10 being lacking. There were frequently two dealers at opposite ends of the table, each with a bank pile of $5,000 or $10,000 [in gold coins]. The mere matching of two cards, sometimes four, the game being decided by the first similar card drawn from the pack, would seem to afford facilities for trickery, while certain conditions ruled in favor of the banker.

Wheels of fortune were popular. A horizontal spinning wheel would turn, with a pointer sweeping by numbers or a display of prizes such as gold coins in marked-off sections. A $10 gold piece plunked down in the right spot would reward the player with a little pile of matching coins. Or,

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 301 ff.
[2] Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast*, 1933, p. 20.
[3] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, p. 239; related gaming information on p. 240.

someone with a heavy $50 gold "slug" could plop it down on a roulette table, and take away five *pounds* more of them if he picked the right number! However, the odds were always in favor of the proprietor, and more than just a few wheels were crooked and could be made to slow down and stop by applying pressure via a linkage hidden under the table. Chuck-a-luck dice cages, numbered wheels or wheels with cards pasted on them, and magical apparatus and illusions were often set up on the street by gamblers, who enticed the passer-by to try his hand.

The best-known gambling hall in the city was the El Dorado on Portsmouth Square, at first housed in an immense tent, then in a large wooden structure, and finally in a three-story brick building.[1] Canvas was the order of the day in 1848 and 1849, and hotels, saloons, groceries, dry goods stores, and most other businesses were in tents, often with large banners on front or attached to the ridge pole. Many gambling parlors, even if housed in tents, endeavored to bespeak elegance and were decorated with statues, paintings, and other artistic touches. Among the attractions at one time in the El Dorado was an orchestrion, or self-playing orchestra, which played classical and popular selections as background music.[2]

In 1850 the Bella Union, another popular gambling hall on Portsmouth Square, may have been the first in town to have a woman croupier. Her presence at the roulette table proved to be a prime drawing card, and soon thereafter "many of the games in the first-class places were operated by handsome and amiable ladies."[3] In time, the number of gaming establishments expanded to "perhaps as many as a thousand. Probably no other American city of similar size had so many games of chance in operation at one time."[4]

In the early days there were dozens of other large gambling halls including the Verandah (built on the site of gold-coin issuer Miners Bank), Aguila de Oro, Empire (opened in May 1850, 140 feet long, and with fine frescoes), the Rendezvous, one floor of the Parker House (next door to the El Dorado), and more.[5]

Saloons offered non-stop revelry with freely flowing drinks, card games, and, often, one or several musicians to add to the festivities. Beer and wine were sold by the bottle, while whiskey was served from the bar. For a dollar bottle of beer, which contained about a fifth of a gallon, the server would earn about 10 cents commission in addition to any tip received. Drinks were often on the house when a lavish spender entered and sat down to play. Sometimes a fancy establishment would offer a "free" dinner, but require each guest to buy a $10 or $15 bottle of champagne to go with it. For those who wanted the intimate companionship of a lady for the evening, private rooms were often available upstairs.

Most entertainment parlors offered musicians or performers who often mounted a small stage at the back. A performer at a square grand piano, usually out of tune,

Interior of the El Dorado gambling hall on Portsmouth Square, San Francisco's best known casino in the early 1850s. Only a few steps away was the private coining establishment of Baldwin & Co., one of several providers of $5, $10, and $20 gold pieces used on the gaming tables. (*California Life Illustrated*)

might be accompanied by a violinist, known as a fiddle player. Sometimes short vaudeville acts or skits would be presented at irregular intervals, becoming more boisterous and raucous as the night progressed. Illumination was by oil lamps in chandeliers and wall fixtures, later (beginning in 1854) replaced with gas generated from coal and distributed via municipal mains, although some private facilities had their own generating units before then. Ornateness was the rule of the day, and fancy carved moldings, pictorial wallpaper, and cut glass ornaments imparted a feeling of luxury. Paintings of nude women were *de rigeur* in gambling establishments. An entertainment hall could be a poor man's palace. Everyone had a chance to be a king, at least for a few moments, by tendering a few gold coins to the croupier as the wheel spun or the cards were turned.

It was common for an easterner to spend six months at hard work searching for gold in riverbeds and embankments in the Sierras, accumulate hundreds or even a few thousand dollars, and then quickly lose it on a visit to San Francisco.

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. 261.

[2] Sources include Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast*, [illegible]. Operated by a pinned wooden barrel and powered by clockwork driven by falling weights (which could weigh hundreds of pounds), these instruments featured hundreds of organ pipes, a drum, cymbal, and other percussion effects. A leading maker of such instruments in the later decades of the nineteenth century was M. Welte & Söhne of Vöhrenbach, later Freiburg, in the Black Forest district of Germany. The saloons, dance halls, and bordellos of San Francisco furnished a ready market for orchestrions until about 1920.

[3] Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast*, [illegible].

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[5] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, p. [illegible]. Robert H. Parker was the proprietor of the Parker House.

Map of San Francisco circa 1850. The shading reflects the density of occupation and construction, with the darker areas being the most heavily built up. The center of social and civic activities at the time was Portsmouth Square (slightly above the center of the map). During the next several years Yerba Buena Cove was filled in, and the intersection of Market and First streets—on the shore in 1850—was six blocks inland by 1855. (Bancroft, *History of California*)

Specific statistics concerning saloons, gambling halls, and related establishments are scarce, especially in view of several fires ravishing the city in the era and the ever-changing nature of the population. Perhaps as realistic a view as any can be found in a survey that the *Christian Advocate*, an anti-saloon, temperance publication, did of liquor sellers in 1853.[1] In town 537 vendors were identified, of which 83 were solely retail liquor establishments selling by the bottle or drink, 52 were wholesalers, 144 were combination taverns and restaurants, 154 were in connection with grocery stores, 46 were gambling houses, and 48 were "supposed to be kept by bawds." The latter is a very rare reference to houses of prostitution, which were usually mentioned only indirectly. When the survey was taken, 556 bartenders were seen on duty.

Circuses

During the Gold Rush era, many circuses and traveling shows played in San Francisco and other California towns and cities, providing light-hearted entertainment to audiences of all ages, although in the early years the younger set was conspicuously absent and women were scarce. J.A. Rowe's Olympic Circus was opened under canvas on October 29, 1849, on Kearny Street nearly opposite the City Hotel. Soon, Rowe advertised that "arrangements are at length completed for the opening of a new, elegant and commodious building devoted to feats of horsemanship and the manly and classical sports of the arena." Among the features set for opening day were:

> Señor Lavery will execute a Chinese Dance with baskets attached to his feet, and perform various and extraordinary acts of agility!
>
> Grand Star & Waltz Entrée by Six Horses! To be followed by the celebrated horse Adonis dancing a hornpipe, keeping correct time with the music.
>
> Mr. Rowe will present the scene of "The Indian Hunter."
>
> Grand Allemande executed by Mr. and Mrs. Rowe on two horses!!!

The performance to conclude with a laughable scene in the Circle called the "One-Wheeled Carriage," or the "Old Man and Old Woman's Overland Route to California."

Prices varied over a period of time, but for the above performances the tariffs included pit $2, boxes $3, and private boxes $10.

Among other attractions in 1849 Rowe featured the Ethiopian Serenaders, a minstrel show. At the time the typical minstrel troupe featured black-face performers (not likely to have been Ethiopians) playing banjos, guitars, drums, and other instruments, and singing, along with comedy routines and, perhaps, a magic act or two. Many popular songs were written for this venue. Rowe enjoyed success for many years (in terms of San Francisco business longevity), until his outfit was sold at sheriff's sale in July 1857.[2]

Also in 1849 the New York Serenaders were organized in the city and featured a combination of instrumental and vocal music. The name "New York" applied to a business or product indicated urbanity and refinement, as did the names of eastern hotels and restaurants adapted for use in California (some mining camp versions of the Astor House being in tents!). In the same year a Mr. Foley set up a circus on Montgomery Street below California Street.

Playing under canvas in San Francisco and also in halls over a period of years was a strong competitor to Rowe, Lee's circus. Founded by Henry Charles Lee, an Englishman who came to America in 1848, Lee & Marshall's National Circus featured equestrian acts, acrobats, and gymnasts. In 1865 the Lee family and two camels were to play a part in the saga of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. This account of Lee's attraction as it appeared under canvas circa 1854 was printed in the *New York Clipper*:[3]

> When the band began that time-honored fanfare, and the glittering cavalcade came prancing into the ring, the glamour of the circus was over us—the cheap finery became cloth of gold, and the tarnished spangles gleaming gems of purest ray, reflecting back the twinkling candle lights and making it all a fairy spectacle.
>
> The tent was lighted by a quadrilateral framework in which were stuck hundreds of candles, and this was hauled up to nearly the top of the tent after they were lighted. We watched this operation as if it had been some kind of magic. At intervals around the ring were stands with more candles on bars. Outside were smoky torches.

Exotic animals were always an attraction in town, and after the early years, most circuses and traveling shows featured unusual beasts. In September 1856 *Hutchings' California Magazine* carried this advertisement:

> THE ELEPHANTS! The world-renowned and only performing elephants, Victoria and Albert, will give their amazing entertainments every evening in the new Pavilion on Jackson Street. Price of admission: $1.00

[1] Described in *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 452, under [illegible], noting that this survey had been republished in the *Herald*.

[2] Sources concerning entertainment are many and include Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848–1859, pp. [illegible] and [illegible] ff. With regard to Rowe's, *Annals of San Francisco*, p. [illegible], noted: "The house could hold from twelve to fifteen hundred, and the prices of admission were $3 to the pit, $5 to the boxes, and $[illegible] for a private box," these prices being different and no doubt from a slightly different time than the advertisement quoted in the text above. A reiteration of some of the information plus an overview of Rowe and his competitors appeared in *Annals*, p. [illegible]: "These were mere tent structures, where [illegible] crowds of easily satisfied and deeply interested spectators, and where spring boards bounced men of various sizes successively over one, two, and three horses, and daring riders, [illegible] leaped through hoops and over ropes, most [illegible]. [illegible] the material for more legitimate display [illegible] were forced to content themselves with what they could get, paying without a murmur, their $3 for pit seats, $5 for box places and $[illegible] for the princely luxury of a private stall."

[3] Retrospective article, December 26, 1903, p. [illegible]. The *New York Clipper* was the standard journal of traveling shows and theater from the 1850s onward, but beginning in [illegible] *The Billboard* was a competitor.

Theatres and Music Halls

On January 16, 1850, the new entertainment season premiered at Washington Hall, near the northwest corner of Kearny and Washington streets. Featured was the Eagle Theatre Company, which had come down river from its home venue of that name in Sacramento.

In February 1850, the first San Francisco building specifically constructed as a theatre opened. Known as the National, it had an ephemeral existence, lasting only until May 4th. The Phoenix Theatre opened on March 23rd, but it too lasted only a short time. On the next day, March 24, the similarly named Phoenix Exchange began business on Portsmouth Square and offered what the trade called "model artists," prurient exhibits of unclad females, one of several such shows in town. Dr. Collyer's Athenaeum, sounding all the world like a fine museum or repository of literature, in fact was filled with nude girls who could be viewed by anyone caring to part with a dollar at the front door.

Attractions often moved, as with the Adelphia Theatre which opened in November 1850, but was burned in May 1852, after which it reopened in another location. Names and styles of entertainment changed as well. On September 13, 1853, the Union Theatre was opened as a general house with plays and music. In 1856 it changed to present Chinese actors to primarily Chinese audiences, and on October 17, 1863, it underwent another transformation and was reopened as Gilbert's New Idea. City directories had a hard time keeping up!

In December 1852 the San Francisco Hall opened as a theatre. Later it was occupied by the San Francisco Minstrels, and in 1858 it was rebuilt and reopened as Maguire's Opera House. Meanwhile in far-off New York City, the first stage production of the melodrama, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was presented in 1852, which in time became America's most popular traveling stage production, except in the South. The younger set in particular came to know the plot line well, and as various troupes came to town they could almost quote the lines of frail little Eliza fleeing northward, or of the despicable Simon Legree.

Very popular in San Francisco during the 1850s were musical shows featuring familiar ballads, patriotic melodies, songs from back home in the East, and even hymns. *Old Hundredth* rang from the chandeliers of many a saloon and music hall as did *The Old Oaken Bucket*, *Darling Clementine*, *Sweet Betsy from Pike*, and, of course, *Oh! Susanna*. Later, during the Civil War in the 1860s, those with a southern point of view were apt to request *Dixie* (which was a latecomer to the music scene, having been written by a Northerner and just before the war), while those from Union territory might ask in particular for *John Brown's Body*, memorializing the hero (or villain, depending on one's point of view) of the raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Sure to win applause and perhaps even coins showered on the stage was a pretty girl singing popular tunes while keeping eye contact with her audience. Bancroft quotes the account of a lady vocalist who was so much appreciated that "gold pieces of $10, $20, and *$50* [italics added] came raining down." In actuality, any lady sustaining a direct hit by a heavy $50 gold coin, of which five combined to weigh more than a *pound*, was a candidate to be rushed to the hospital![1]

Thomas Maguire, who operated the Jenny Lind Theatre in the early days, later ran a theatre-academy of music and an opera house. He booked much worthwhile talent into the city, continuing from the early days until the last days of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. Maguire acquired substantial wealth and became one of San Francisco's best known citizens. The name of Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale" brought to America by showman P.T. Barnum in 1850, was used on many other things, from ships to gambling tents to whiskey bottles to song titles.

Maguire's theatre was the scene of many incidents including this one:[2]

> Lovers of tragedy who attended the Jenny Lind on the night of the 14th of January 1851 to witness *Pizarro* were regaled with a recital of real life which equaled anything they might have seen upon the stage.
>
> It seems that Mrs. Hambleton, who was to have acted a part that night, did not live in harmony with her husband, but found the society of Mr. Coad, a member of the same company, more congenial. Matters had not proceeded far when Mr. Hambleton brought on the climax in a storm of passion. Confronting the lovers, who were guiltless of any criminality, he made the man promise to quit the country instantly. The woman seeing all hope of happiness had gone, took poison and died; whereat Coad also took poison and attempted to die, but could not. There was no performance at the Jenny Lind that night.

Acting troupes found that in San Francisco the pay was good, the audiences were enthusiastic, and there were a lot of things to do in the off-hours. As time went on, the city showcased talent from all over the world.

A Visit to San Francisco in 1853

In May 1853, New York attorney E.S. Capron arrived in San Francisco aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* at the be-

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, pp. 245-246. A particularly lethal $50 slug would have been one of Augustus Humbert's earlier (1851) productions with a fineness of only 880, which was made up for by an especially heavy overall weight of about 2½ troy ounces. As can be seen throughout the present text, the writer enjoys commenting on contemporary citations with a numismatic connection. Many comments and recollections written by other than historians were inaccurate. However, it must be said that Bancroft, who in the above citation was quoting someone else, a Mr. Garniss, on his own was very accurate, and today Bancroft's accounts of Moffat, the Oregon Exchange Co., etc. (not quoted in the present text as they have been superseded by the writing of numismatists Adams, Kagin, *et al.*,) are found to be quite factual.

[2] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 268-269.

ginning of a three-month business trip within the state. The sidewheel steamer had been plying the route from Nicaragua for over a year and had brought thousands of eager immigrants and travelers to the city. A keen observer, Capron subsequently wrote the *History of California, from Its Discovery to the Present Time,* published in 1854 in Boston, this being one of the most objective and accurate of all contemporary journals to reach print. While the story of Capron's voyage on the *Brother Jonathan* is delineated in Chapter 8, his account of life in the city is appropriate to relate here:[1]

The City Scene

Remembering its very recent date [of establishment as a city], the stranger is astonished to see the large number of massive buildings which adorn many of the streets of the city. The original tenements are rapidly disappearing, and erections of stone, iron, and brick are supplying their places. Bricks are manufactured in the country, but the stone is brought from Sydney and China....

Many parts of the city have now the appearance of an old town; and, in passing through them one often forgets that he is not in New York or Boston! The crowds on the sidewalks, the rattle of drays, the display of hacks, the roll of omnibuses, the ringing of bells, the fruit stands on the corners of the streets, the cries of the various pedlars of small wares and knick-knacks, the long wharves loaded with merchandise, and the spacious harbor dotted all over and alive with the shipping of every clime, indicate a city, the original of which might be covered with the dusts of time. But this is San Francisco, and these are the evidences of its energy and thrift in the fifth year of its existence!...

The plan of the city resembles, in some respects, that of the old Spanish towns. It has one principal plaza, or public ground, called Portsmouth Square, situated in the central part of the city and on which fronts the City Hall.... The streets are narrow, and intersect at right angles—about 40 extending from the bay westerly over the hills, and about 20 extending from hill to hill, north and south, across the city. Many of these thoroughfares are compactly lined with buildings on both sides for the distance of more than a mile; and on all the others, cottages and various erections exist in considerable numbers.... All the principal thoroughfares are substantially planed [leveled]; and the substitution of stone pavement is commenced at several points. This improvement was absolutely indispensable, as a defense against the waves of rolling sand which would otherwise render the streets heavy, if not unendurable.

The principal public wharves are Market, Central, Pacific, and Broadway—they being extensions of the streets of the same names....

San Francisco contains 18 churches, several of which are tasteful specimens of architectural skill. The Methodists have five churches; the Presbyterians, Episcopals, Baptists, and Roman Catholics have each two; the Unitarians, one; and the "Sons of the Sea" have a *Bethel,* which is moored in the bay.

The city contains three public and several private markets—specimens of neatness and order, and none in the world are more abundantly supplied with the necessaries, or with a greater variety of the luxuries of life. There may be obtained the cured provisions, the fruits, and many of the vegetables, of almost every clime. With China, the East and West Indies, South and Central America, Mexico, the Sandwich Islands, Australia, the Atlantic American states, and Europe, the communication of the city is direct and constant; and all these countries contribute to the supply of its markets.... The markets of New York, although more extensive establishments, do not afford so great a variety as those of this city.

There are here published 12 daily newspapers, two tri-weeklies, six weeklies, one commercial, one French, and one Sunday paper.

Good public baths are numerous, and some of them are tastefully arranged and furnished. Nothing east of the mountains will be found to exceed them.[2]

[At the time, Capron estimated the population of San Francisco to be 50,000 people, compared with 2,800 in Los Angeles and 4,000 in the mining town of Placerville. In the prior year, 1852, the resident population was estimated by others as 40,776, including 29,165 white males and only 5,154 white females; in addition it was thought that there were about 6,000 visitors to the city at any given time.]

Coins and Prices

It is worthy of note that a large proportion of the gold now in circulation here is not the national coin of any government, but is native gold, assayed on private account, and circulated as money....[3]

So that prices in San Francisco may be compared with those of other cities of an equal population, several examples are here given:[4]

A small half house, rent per month, $250. A single room in a small house, for lodging per month, $50 to $75. Common labor, per day, $5. Mechanical (skillful) labor, per day, $10. Physician's visit, single, $10. A lawyer's word of counsel, $10. Washing, per dozen items, $4. Hair cutting, $1. Shaving, 50¢. Eggs per dozen, fresh, $3. Chickens, each, $1.50. Horse, to hire for ride, $5. Horse to buy, $300 to $1,000. Cow, $100 to $300. Hat, $10. Shoes, per pair, $3. Boots, per pair, $10.

Gold watches from $100 to $8,000. Pants, $10 to $20. Dress, $30 to $60. Overcoat, $35 to $60. Shirts, per dozen, $50 to $70. Milk per quart, 50¢. Butcher's beef per pound, 12¢ to 30¢. Fresh pork per pound, 15¢ to 50¢. Water for domestic use, per pail, 10¢. Best pears, each 10¢. Best Chili [*sic*] apples, 10¢. Cheese per pound, imported, 30¢. Sandwich Island oranges, best quality, each, 25¢. Bricks, per thousand, $25 to $50. Lumber, per thousand feet, $80 to $150.

Entertainment

The city supports three theatres, two of which are open every night of the seven in the week, and many of the representations on the boards pamper to the lowest passions[illegible]

[1] Excerpted; initial quotation begins on Capron's p. [illegible]

[2] Very few private residences had indoor bathing [illegible] houses had none at all, and hotels were apt to have [illegible] the entire establishment or one bath on each floor. [illegible] ticed by many, and it was not uncommon to keep [illegible] clothes, not by washing. Some people viewed bathing [illegible]

[3] The reference is to the coins of Moffat, the U.S. Assay Office of Gold, Wass, Molitor & Co., and other mostly private [illegible] sands of these pieces were in everyday [illegible] of 1853. Such coins are discussed in Chapter [illegible]

[4] Many sensational stories had reached the [illegible] consumer goods in 1848 and early 1849 [illegible] As these numbers were exciting to read, [illegible] embellished, with the result that [illegible] normal, as Capron [illegible] distant from San Francisco, prices [illegible] tiples of San Francisco values.

[5] Translation: Many acts were [illegible]

Ardent spirits, wine, and beer are more generally used as a beverage in San Francisco than in any other city, perhaps, in the United States. About 600 drinking houses are so well sustained that the proprietors are made rich. Many of these places are attended, and frequented, by women, often luxuriously attired, who chat, and smoke, and smile, over the convivial glass, with as much zest and indifference as they would exhibit in the observance of any modest ceremony. These saloons are not infrequently provided with a retiring room, where customers of both sexes while away the night with music, dancing, gaming, and drinking; and the walls of many of these rooms are adorned in a manner which our puritan mothers would not have approved.

A faithful recital of the prevalent licentiousness of this city cannot with propriety be placed on the pages of any book. The windows and doors of many dwellings,[1] and even the public streets at noon day as well as night, testify to an excess of immorality far exceeding that to be found in other American cities. the bearing, address and assurance, in all the public places, of the abandoned, a fearfully numerous class, too clearly shows that in their own belief at least, their presence is more than tolerated.... Its corrupt issues have flowed to the extremities of the state and into all the cities and villages far up in the mountains of the gold region.

The city contains at least six gaming houses conducted on a magnificent scale, besides many smaller ones. These are sanctioned by law, the practice of a few games only being prohibited. The state has recognized gambling as an employment—certainly strange legislation for the middle of the nineteenth century and for a state governed by American citizens. During the day, and until late at night, these houses are thronged with the old and young, who are there to drink, and occasionally win money, but are oftener beggared or reduced to poverty. The large saloons contain from six to 10 tables each, and the smaller ones from one to three. On one occasion a computation, as near as could be, was made of the money then in bank on the twenty tables, and the aggregate exceeded $200,000. More than that sum was at stake at other games.... The following descriptions of two of these gaming houses, an American and a Chinese,[3] will portray the manner of life pursued in this city by at least five or six thousand persons.

American Gaming House

Several fashionably dressed men earnestly engaged in conversation may be seen standing on the sidewalk before a lofty doorway. Others are passing out and in. We are prevented from taking a view of the interior by a tall screen, of beautiful workmanship, placed a few feet within the portal.

We enter and pass behind the mute sentinel. Now we behold a spacious hall, perhaps 50 feet by 80 in size. The walls are richly furnished, and in the centre of each side is suspended a magnificently gilded mirror of the largest size. From the ceiling above hang in clusters many solar lamps, sparkling with brilliants, and on the sides and ends of the room are smaller lights of similar finish.[2] In one corner is a spacious bar, elaborately embellished, and on its shelves are tastefully arranged, among a profusion of flowers and images of beasts and birds, hundreds of decanters adorned with shining labels, and filled with tempting wines and other beverages of the most popular brands. Behind the counter are young men, attired with special taste and neatness, actively serving the ever-changing throng that worship at the shrine of Bacchus.

Opposite, and elevated midway between the floor and ceiling, is an orchestra, on which are a piano and six players on instruments who are filling the spacious hall with the sweetest airs of their art.

On the broad floor are arranged at proper distances eight large tables, covered with broadcloth, and on each is a pile of gold and silver coin, varying in amount from $5,000 to $10,000. One of the tables is placed just before the screen, and another in range with it at the opposite end of the room. At each of these is seated a "lady," superbly clad, who smiles invitingly on everyone. She gracefully waves her fair hand, sparkling with diamonds and gold, as an invitation to gentlemen to be seated, and to try their luck to win her "pile" or lose their own. These "ladies" are in the service of the proprietor, and their wins are his gains. The "green one" who yields to the fascinations of these Delilahs will surely be deprived of his golden strength.

At the other tables are seated gentlemen who are playing, perhaps, for a very large stake, and whose mental disquiet is plainly visible in their faces, as the chances of the game vacillates between them. Hundreds are looking on, apparently interested in the result, and betraying equally anxious apprehensions. Indelicate representations [nude paintings] upon the walls of the spacious saloon are not wanting to complete the scene. It would seem that the designer of such pictures must have burned the midnight oil long over the pages of Horace and Ovid; and that the man who can display them, and the female especially who can tolerate the act by her presence, must have strangely forgotten, if, indeed, they ever learned, the distinctions between virtue and vice.

Accommodations

The city is deficient in good hotels. The stranger may get a room to himself at the Oriental, the Crescent City, the Niantic,

Typical rustic lodging accommodations in San Francisco in 1849-1850. Note the canvas overhead. At the time there were only a few of decent hotels in the city. (*California Life Illustrated*)

[1] Nightly "ladies" would sit or stand in windows and doors, beckoning to potential patrons. Bordello houses would often have the first name of a lady on a small sign on the door.

[2] Solar lamps = gas-fired lamps which in 1853 were used in some private businesses; municipal distribution of gas via underground mains began in 1854. Brilliants = cut pieces of crystal glass.

[3] After this, [illegible] gives a view of the "Chinese Gaming House," not quoted here.

or at Wilson's Exchange, but the more probable result of an application to either will be a lodging with five or six others. This is alike disagreeable to all parties. These hotels, except the latter, are constructed of wood, and if they take fire, the lodger is fortunate who shall escape from the burning pile with the loss of all valuables but life. During the past season Wilson's Exchange has been thoroughly repaired and extensively enlarged, and being built of brick, should the table and rooms correspond with the exterior, it may be said with truth that San Francisco contains one safe and comfortable hotel.[1]

The very general use of wine "at table" will astound the advocates of total abstinence. In all the restaurants that beverage is furnished at the morning and evening repast; and in many of them it is provided without request, included in the charges, and the customer must pay for it whether pledge or principle does or does not forbid its use.

Another description of a gaming house, specifically the best-known establishment in the early 1850s, is furnished by William Taylor, a minister who, it is presumed, remained in the doorway:[2]

Nearly all the gamblers in the city were located round the Plaza [Portsmouth Square] in the best houses the city could afford. An idea of the prestige of the gambling fraternity and the magnificence of their saloons in those days may be obtained from...the interior of the El Dorado, a large gambling house at the northeast corner of the Plaza.

The tables, loaded with gold and silver, you cannot see for the multitude; but in the rear end of the saloon you see, elevated on a stage, a band of the best musicians the country could furnish, sending forth their melody in such sweetness and variety as to crowd the house and hold in admiration the promiscuous masses in the streets. I have heard them sing and play, "Home, sweet, sweet home," till homeless wanderers by the hundreds would stand entranced, seeming to live for a time in the embrace of loved ones, surrounded by all the sweet associations of the past. Alas! It was but the song of the siren. On the right may be seen the beautifully ornate bar, with splendid mirrors in the rear, round which many a jolly circle of hopeful young prodigals drank to each other's health the deadly draught.

The El Dorado was also described by Bancroft (paraphrased):[3]

The Ed Dorado, corner of Dupont and Washington streets, was in full blast from 1850 to 1856. There were nightly collected the largest crowds of the worst of all classes, all who had a few dollars to gamble, or an hour's time to while away, gazing at the people coming and going, at the nude pictures on the walls, and the movements of the barkeepers, and listening to the chink of coin and the really fine music of the band.

The *Alta California*, May 27, 1850, told of the completion of the Empire gambling hall and of the beginning of business at the Parker House, reflecting the civic pride in such establishments:[4]

[The main room of the Empire] is about 140 feet in length, by 50 in width, with a lofty ceiling, and is decorated in the most magnificent manner. It is painted in fresco by Messrs. Fairchild and Duchean, and is certainly a most creditable evidence of their artistic skill and taste. We do not know of any public room in any portion of the United States of so great an extent, or possessing such elegant decorations and embellishments. Our New Orleans and New York friends would scarcely believe that they could be so far excelled in California.

The Parker House, the lower floor, was also opened. The room is of about the same size, and handsomely fitted up, although not with quite so much elegance as the Empire. As yet but one story is completed, but it is contemplated to carry out the entire building on the same extensive and elegant plan. The rapidity with which these places of public resort have been completed speaks much for the enterprise of the proprietors.

Scenes of 1854

The social and entertainment venues of San Francisco changed constantly, and a vignette of one year might not be relevant to the next. A view of the gambling halls and saloons is offered in this description dated April 1854, by which time it was said that there were fewer large establishments than there had been a year or two earlier:[5]

The chief of the [gambling halls] are the El Dorado, on the Plaza, and the Arcade and Polka on Commercial Street. These places still exhibit the old lascivious pictures on the walls, while orchestral music, excellently performed, continues to allure the idle, the homeless and family-less, as to a place of enjoyment, where their earnings are foolishly spent. The cards are often still dealt out and the wheels turned or dice thrown, by beautiful women, well skilled in the arts calculated to allure, betray and ruin the unfortunate men who become their too willing victims.

About the wharves, and in various interior streets, there are other public gaming tables, of a lower description, where the miner particularly is duly fleeced of his bags of dust. There are also some half a dozen noted houses, of a semi-public character, where play is largely carried on by the higher order of citizens. In these places, sumptuous refreshments are provided gratuitously for visitors. The keepers are wealthy men and move in the better social circles of the town. At their "banks," single stakes are quite frequently made as high as a thousand dollars, and even five thousand dollars are often deposited upon one hazard. The "bankers," however, are not too proud to accept a single dollar stake. The game played is faro. At such places, very large sums are lost and won, and many fine fellows have been ruined there, as well in mind as in pocket. In strictly private circles, there is likewise a great deal of play carried on, involving large sums. The good old game of long whist is ridiculously slow and scientific for the [illegible] operations of the true gambler, and the seducing poker [illegible] is generally preferred.[6] All these things unhappily harmonize

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1 Apparently, Capron passed by the hotel but did not [illegible]

2 *California Life Illustrated*, 1860, p. 78. The narrative continued beyond the quotation here. Seemingly [illegible] was the busiest day of the week at the El Dorado!

3 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. [illegible]

4 As quoted by Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. 699; a somewhat related account appears on pp. 709-710, and describes the gambling action, including "Gamblers now and then dropping a gold bar, or a five or ten, or twenty or fifty dollar piece."

5 *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 502-503, descriptions of the sequence of events in 1854.

6 Most other contemporary accounts differ and name faro and monte as the two most popular card games in public places at the time.

but too well with the general speculative spirit that marks the people of San Francisco.

The same account suggested that San Franciscans were more intellectually honest than their counterparts on the other side of the continent, particularly certain citizens of New England:

> Though there be much vice in San Francisco, there is one virtue—though perhaps a negative one, the citizens at least have. They are not hypocrites, who pretend to high qualities which they do not possess. In great cities of the old world, or it may be even in those of the pseudo-righteous New England states, there may be quite as much crime and vice committed as in San Francisco, only the customs of the former places throw a decent shade over the grosser, viler aspects. The criminal, the fool, and the voluptuary are not allowed to boast, directly or indirectly, of their bad, base, or foolish deeds, as is so often done in California.
>
> Yet these deeds are none the less blamable on that account, nor perhaps are our citizens to be more blamed because they often seek activities that are considered morally and socially wrong by others at a distance, but which are not so viewed by San Franciscans when done among themselves. It is the hurt done to a man's own conscience that often constitutes the chief harm of an improper action; and if San Franciscans conscientiously think that, after all, their wild and pleasant life is not so very, very wrong, neither is it so really and truly wrong as the puritanic and affectedly virtuous people of Maine liquor prohibition and of foreign lands would fain believe.

Among the city's most popular outdoor spots was a facility operated by Christian Russ. On May 7 and 8, 1854, over 2,000 citizens of German ancestry converged on the place to watch gymnastic feats and listen to music. On this and other occasions, beer flowed freely and music and laughter rang to the skies. A contemporary account described the spot:

> Russ's Garden, a short distance from the thickly populated portion of the city, between the Mission Road and the South Beach, affords the weary citizens an opportunity of relaxation away from the scene of their toil. This is one of the most beautiful spots and popular places of resort in the vicinity. Hither celebrations, excursions, and the like rejoicings, are held by societies and coteries on their various anniversaries and *fete*-days; while continually gay carriage loads or cavalcades, or solitary individuals, mounted or on foot, wend their way thither and amuse themselves about the pleasant grounds with games, athletic feats, or merry feasting. In the spacious amphitheatre at this place, sundry interesting public exhibitions are occasionally given to amuse the crowds that here assemble.

Russ's Garden, a popular gathering place offered amusements for young and old alike, but mostly adults who often spent their time in revelry, aided by a never-ending flow of beer. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

Municipal gas lights on streets were inaugurated on February 11, 1854, by which time certain of the more pretentious hotels, saloons, and gambling halls had already been illuminated by gas generated from units fired with coal. In time, gas lamps replaced oil lamps in most commercial establishments in the city. An account noted:

> The city was first lighted with coal gas on the evening of this day. The occasion was celebrated by several hundred citizens at a banquet given by the trustees of the San Francisco Gas Company, in the Oriental Hotel. Already about three miles of pipes were laid in the streets, to be increased as the public accommodation required. At first, only a few of the principal streets and some of the leading hotels and large mercantile establishments were lighted with gas; but every day the number is increasing. The Metropolitan Theatre...adopted the new light. It will, of course, soon become general, and prove a great benefit to the city.

Lawlessness and Unruly Conduct

In 1849 many ruffians gathered to form roving gangs known as the Hounds, spreading out from their headquarters in town to loot and kill. Public outcry arose, and after many difficulties, the members were dispersed, some being run out of town. However, the supply of malcontents continued to be replenished, as virtually every incoming steamship passenger list included adventurers who wanted wealth without working for it. Bancroft told of a strip of low-class dens:[4]

> The block [opposite City Hall], stretching toward Montgomery Street and at the foot of Telegraph Hill, was filled with shabby dens and public houses of the lowest order, frequented by sinister-looking men and brazen-faced females, who day or night were always ready for low revelry or black crime.
>
> The signs above the drinking houses bore names which, like Tam O'Shanter, Magpie, and Boar's Head,[5] smacked of English seaport resorts, and within them Australian slang floated

[1] The state of Maine had enacted statewide prohibition, to the joy of temperance advocates and to the dismay of just about everyone else. The great American social movements of the nineteenth century included temperance, abolition of slavery, and rights for women.

[2] *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 536, 663.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 517.

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI 1848-1859, pp. 174-182, the short quotation given above was his entire text for this spread of pages, but each page contained about 90% footnotes relating to the general composition of the city of the time, businesses and where they were located.

[5] A spoonerization of "Whore's Bed," the implications of which are obvious.

> freely upon the infected atmosphere. It was in fact the headquarters of the British convict class, whose settlement, known as Sydney Town, extended hence northeastward round the hill.[1] It was the rallying point for pillaging raids, and to it was lured many an unwary stranger, to be dazed with a sandbag below, and robbed, perhaps to be hurled from some Tarpean projection into the bay.

In 1851 crime in the city had reached an unprecedented high. Citizens walking on the streets were apt to be robbed or killed. Stores were broken into, and fear prevailed. Taking matters into their own hands, thousands of San Franciscans gathered in public meetings, and from these the Committee of Vigilance was formed. The group intended to bring offenders to quick but proper justice, as it was felt that the police acted too slowly if at all. In practice some alleged offenders were unfairly lynched by orders of the Committee, despite dissenting votes on the jury of 12 which was to have given unanimous verdicts. For a time, crime in the streets diminished, only to rise again.

In 1856 there was another public reaction to the widespread feeling that the response of local authorities and police was inadequate. Corruption within City Hall, voting frauds, dishonest politicians, plus the number of incidents to be handled combined to create a virtual collapse of the municipal police and judiciary system. The Vigilance Committee, an expanded successor to the 1851 group, took the law into its own hands, conducted trials, and meted out punishment, all in an extra-legal manner. Its most sensational action came shortly after the assassination of James King of William (of whom more will be related). His killer, James P. Casey, was hauled out of jail, tried by the Committee, and sentenced to death, along with another notorious figure of the time, Charles Cora, a gambler and villain of deserved low repute.

Years later, the Vigilante Committee (as it was often miscalled) became an integral part of the western genre of romantic fiction and films, along with cowboys and Indians, the Pony Express, and posses of sheriffs and lawmen, all of which became far more glamorous in the telling than in actuality.[2]

In time, orderly law and legal processes were restored to the city. By 1860 crime had been reduced dramatically, and the "Wild West" days were history. Accounts sent to the East were careful to describe how "proper" the city had become, and this may have been so with regard to lawlessness. However, legalized prostitution and gambling continued to be attractions of the city. Many anti-this and anti-that publications were written and groups formed. Those who did not gamble often felt that no others should either. Ditto for sampling the enticements of a lady of the night or lifting a glass of California wine.

The Great Fires

For a period of several years beginning on Christmas Eve, 1849, San Francisco was ravaged by devastating fires,

Dennison's Exchange on Kearny Street, Portsmouth Square, as it appeared just before the devastating fire of December 24, 1849. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

most thought to have been deliberately set.[3] If there was a benefit to the conflagrations it was that each wave of rebuilding brought with it improved building practices and more durable structures.

Meanwhile, the city became increasingly fire-conscious, wells were dug, pails of water were kept on hand, and other precautions were taken. The municipal Fire Department expanded rapidly, and within a few years it was one of the most well-equipped and fit in the entire nation. City directories proudly described the various pumpers and other apparatus and told of the various fire companies who operated them.

By the late 1860s most commercial blocks in town were made of brick and were very substantial. Many of these stood until a certain day in April 1906.

The First Great Fire (December 24, 1849)

On December 24, 1849, San Francisco experienced the first great fire to ravage the city. Flames, believed to have been ignited by an incendiary, broke out about 6 o'clock in the morning in Dennison's Exchange on Kearny Street, opposite the city hub at the time, Portsmouth Square.[4]

The night before had been one of great revelry in the saloons and gambling halls in the district, and by dawn

[1] The ruffians from this district were popularly known as "Sydney coves" or "Sydney ducks."

[2] Relevant to popular misconceptions, it may come as a surprise to learn that it was not until after the Civil War, on May 5, 1865, that the first train robbery recorded in the United States history occurred when an Ohio & Mississippi Railroad passenger train from Cincinnati to St. Louis was derailed by items put on the track near North Bend, Ohio, and armed men went through the cars to rob passengers of money and valuables. By this time trains had been in service in the East for about a quarter century.

[3] Sources include Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 202 ff. Bancroft gives extensive listings of the structures and businesses consumed.

[4] Portsmouth Square was bounded on the north by Washington Street, on the south by Clay Street, on the west by Dupont Street (name later changed to Grant Street), and on the east by Kearny Street.

there were many people still in the streets. Bystanders watched helplessly as Dennison's became a swirling inferno of fire and smoke. Flames spread to adjacent structures including numerous tents. The order was given for firemen to use gunpowder to demolish a row of buildings in the fire path, thus averting an even wider loss. When the fire burned out, about 50 houses and several commercial buildings including the El Dorado gambling hall on the southeast corner of Washington Street and the adjacent Parker House hotel had been destroyed, for a loss of about $1,250,000.

The Parker House, built in 1848, was managed by Thomas Maguire, the foremost impresario and entertainment host of the era. One floor of the hotel was devoted to gambling and was one of the main San Francisco attractions in that category, helping to pay Maguire's rent of $15,000 per month.

The *Annals of San Francisco* described the conflagration:[1]

> The first "great" fire occurred on the 24th of December 1849. Some such calamity had been dreaded through the months of high winds, by all who took into consideration the exceedingly inflammable nature of the buildings. Thin boards, cloth, and paint, were tempting inviters of the destroyer. When it did come, it spread like a pestilence; and although the windy season had passed, it consumed completely the most flourishing portion of the city. Dennison's Exchange, in which the fire originated, was ceiled with cotton cloth, and that was painted. Instantly this was on fire, and the whole building was burning before the neighborhood was aroused, it being not yet quite six o'clock in the morning. Scarcely a breath of wind was stirring to fan the fiery flame.
>
> At once the citizens crowded to the scene. Then the din of a thousand voices arose amid the crash of falling frames, the jingling of shattered windows, the sharp sound of axes, and above all this, the roar of the devouring element, which now surged wildly round the Parker House, from the windows and doors of which, at both ends, dense clouds of smoke and a [illegible]
>
> [illegible] the flames, that the conflagration was at once [illegible] all control. On and still onward it [illegible] everything [illegible] half the square [illegible] embers, like the [illegible] was to be seen where so recently had stood the works of human skill and labor. More than a million of dollars had been destroyed in the [illegible]

Within five weeks, by the end of January 1850, no sign remained of the fire damage, and the district had been rebuilt. The Jenny Lind Theatre, built by Maguire on the leased site of the Parker House, threw open its doors on September 20, 1850, but was burned in two later fires.

The rebuilt El Dorado, now in an imposing building, was controlled in 1850 by Chambers & Co.[2] Later, P. Sherreback, owner of the lot, put up the Our House refectory on the site. Somehow, while the El Dorado was mentioned in just about every detailed account of San Francisco in the early Gold Rush era, little reached print about Our House. Presumably, its activities were staid and unexciting.

The Second Great Fire (May 4, 1850)

The second great fire erupted at 4 o'clock in the morning darkness on May 4, 1850, in the U.S. Exchange, a seedy gambling hall located not far from where the December 1849 fire had ignited. Within seven hours the conflagration destroyed three blocks between Montgomery and Jackson streets, bounded by Jackson and Clay streets and the north and east sides of Portsmouth Square. Again, many buildings were demolished by gunpowder by firemen in advance of the fire, preventing further spread. Crowds of bystanders were implored to help with the fire fighting, but unless they were paid to do so, few responded.

This time about 200 to 300 buildings were destroyed, and damage amounted to close to $4,000,000. Among these was the newly opened National Theatre. A reward of $5,000 was posted for the perpetrators, as the fire was believed to have been arson. Although several arrests were made, no convictions resulted. Within two weeks after the embers cooled, about half of the area was rebuilt or was well underway with new construction.

Residents of the city were urged to keep six water-filled buckets ready should another fire occur.

The Third Great Fire (June 14, 1850)

While rebuilding on the charred foundations and sites of the May fire was still in progress, flames broke out again. This time the cause seems to have been accidental, an overheated stovepipe or chimney. Flames were seen just before 8 o'clock in the morning. Within several hours a large area between Clay and California streets, from Kearny Street to the waterfront, was reduced to ashes. Loss estimates included about 300 buildings and contents worth $3,000,000 to $5,000,000. The Banking House of James King of Wm. was among the casualties.

After the fire, awareness of safety precautions became widespread, and many larger buildings were constructed of brick and some of stone.

The Fourth Great Fire (September 17, 1850)

It was a year for fires, and the next notable conflagration broke out at 4 o'clock in the morning on September 17 at the Philadelphia House on the north side of Jackson Street, not far from the popular Washington Market. It quickly spread to destroy most of the buildings bounded by Dupont and Montgomery streets framed by Washington and Pacific streets. Most of the structures in that district were one story and made of wood. It was estimated that

1 Pages 598-599.

2 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 181, 188, and 190.

150 or so buildings were lost at a valuation ranging from several hundred thousand dollars up to a million. It was never easy to estimate fire damages, as the contents of many buildings were unknown. Further, any figures of the worth of destroyed structures was always lower than their cost of replacement.

Over a period of time, many other blazes routinely broke out, as they did in any large city, but none in San Francisco covered such a wide area as the "great" fires. On October 31, 1850, a blaze believed to have been set, destroyed the City Hospital and the building next-door, for a loss of $250,000. Several patients were injured.

On December 14 of the same year, a fire on Sacramento Street burned several iron-clad buildings and their contents, for a loss of about $1,000,000. "This shook the faith in corrugated iron walls," historian Bancroft later commented.

It should be remarked that early fire accounts of the city typically concentrate on *material*, not *human* losses. There were many injuries in the various conflagrations and a few deaths.

Scene at a wharf in San Francisco Bay circa 1849, with the sailing ship *Apollo* (in the background, left) converted to the Apollo Saloon. In the foreground is the *Euphemia*, now converted to the city jail. Later, this area was filled, and the *Apollo* found itself several blocks *inland*. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

The Fifth Great Fire (May 3, 1851)

The San Francisco fire to end all fires started late in the evening of May 3, 1851, on the south side of the Plaza in the paint and upholstery establishment of Baker & Meserve, close by Bryant's Hotel. While contemporary accounts state that the blaze started anywhere from about 9:20 p.m. to 11:00 on the 3rd, it has often been called the fire of May 4th, that being the anniversary date of one of the great fires of 1850 and thus easier to remember.

Aided by a stiff northwest breeze, a veritable firestorm erupted. So fierce were the flames, so intense the heat, that the contents of iron-clad and brick-faced buildings were roasted to charcoal. Even the sidewalks and the streets, laid with wooden planks to keep out the dust, abetted the fire as flames traveled under the surface, to unexpectedly pop up and ignite distant areas. For a time it seemed as if the whole world was on fire. The bright glow in the moonless night sky could be seen at Monterey on the coast 100 miles away.

With the notable exception of a half dozen men trapped in a building with iron doors and shutters that expanded in the heat to become immovable and three firemen crushed by a falling wall, recorded deaths were few. A dozen firemen were almost killed when Naglee's Building collapsed, but all escaped. In a city of itinerants, with little in the way of detailed municipal records of inhabitants, the final toll was never computed.

About 22 blocks of the city, comprising virtually the entire commercial district, were laid to waste. Included were 1,000 to 2,000 mostly small structures and contents valued well over $10,000,000, or more than all previous fires combined.[1] About 68 commercial blocks were destroyed, ironically including nearly all of the "fireproof" ones. Only 17 or so large buildings in the district were saved.

The Jenny Lind Theatre was among the casualties, but would rise again. Of the nearly dozen newspapers in town, only the *Alta California* escaped the inferno. Delmonico's saloon on Montgomery Street between Washington and Merchant streets—the restaurant of choice for those who could afford to pay $2 to $5 for lunch and twice that amount for supper—was no more.

The old hulls of the *Niantic*, *Apollo*, *Gen. Harrison*, and *Georgean*, rented for storage of goods, became blackened hulks in this great fire, thus ending one of the traditions of early Gold Rush San Francisco, that of converting ships to other uses. The trend had begun in the summer of 1849 when the old hulk of the *Euphemia*, a familiar brig that had come in and out of San Francisco harbor during the 1840s before the Gold Rush, was purchased and outfitted as the city jail.[2] The *Niantic* out of Boston, was in shallow water near the docks. Planking, windows, and other additions were made, an extension was built, and it became the Niantic Hotel in its glory days, later to be boarded up and, as noted, burned. The Niantic Hotel was later rebuilt in different, standard form (without a keel!).

The following account in *The Annals of San Francisco* reflects a survey of ships in San Francisco harbor on October 31, 1851, and mentions certain store ships and their history:[3]

[1] Other sources include widely varying estimates. [illegible] *Fire, The Great Fires of History*, [illegible] buildings including [illegible]

[2] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. 415.

[3] Page 357.

> Ships in the harbor on this date included 232 American ships, of which 9 were ocean steamers, these being the only steamers in the bay; 36 British ships, 11 French ships, 6 Chilean ships, 10 from Bremen, 4 of Austrian registry, 4 German, and a remarkable 148 ships used for storage.
>
> The store ships had originally belonged to all nations, though chiefly to America. In 1848 and 1849, most of the vessels that then arrived in the bay were deserted by their crews, while a boat in these years and in 1850, had many old and unseaworthy vessels had been hurriedly pressed into the vast immigration service to California. A considerable number of these vessels were not worth the expense of manning and removing, and so they were left to be used as stores and lodging houses in the suddenly thronged town, or to rot and sink, dismantle and forgotten... Several of the ships were filled around with land and found themselves in the middle of the city.

Relative to the expansion of the city at the expense of the bay, the *Annals* noted this:[1]

> The store ship *Apollo*....was anchored in the cove, some distance from the beach. It was subsequently used for a lodging house and drinking saloon. As the city improvements progressed, lots were piled, capped, and filled in on a flat covered by the waters of the bay, far beyond where the *Apollo* lay, and strangers visiting the city were astonished to see the hull of a large ship located in the very heart of the city, surrounded on all sides with large blocks of substantial brick and stone edifices.

The fire of May 1851 virtually destroyed the first truly substantial and elegant hotel in the city, the Union, which had opened in autumn 1850.[2] The owners, Selover & Co., had employed J.W. Priestly, who agreed to complete it within 26 days. Including opulent furnishings the cost of the four and one half story brick edifice was $250,000. After the fire it was rebuilt and subsequently catered to a lower class clientele.[3] The chronicle of San Francisco includes many instances of great hotels of one era becoming the noisome dives of the next.

The Seal of the City of San Francisco in the mid-1850s. Featured is a phoenix, the mythical bird of Egyptian antiquity which rose from its own ashes to experience a new life—symbolic of the fires and rebuilding of the city. Later the Seal was modified to show two miners, a ship, and a shield. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

In an incident that became a favorite anecdote in the town's history, the owners of Dewitt & Harrison were able to save their building on Sansome Street by pouring 83,000 gallons of *vinegar* on it! The Verandah, built of brick on Portsmouth Square on the site where Wright & Co. once engaged in business and issued $10 gold coins bearing the imprint of the Miners Bank, escaped destruction, being the only structure in its block to do so. Diagonally as the crow flies, a little more than a block away, the brick office of Augustus Humbert, who had been appointed United States assayer of gold for the state, remained standing, a blessing to numismatic posterity, as this facility's main product consisted of octagonal $50 gold coins.

Rebuilding soon commenced, and by May 15 there were already 250 houses under construction, 75 of which had been completed enough to permit occupancy. Commercial buildings, mostly of brick, rose from new foundations.

The Sixth Great Fire (June 22, 1851)

The end of the "great fire" series came at about 11 o'clock in the morning of June 22, 1851. A blaze ignited in a dwelling on the north side of Pacific Street, below Powell, and soon spread. The Jenny Lind Theatre, run by Thomas Maguire was destroyed (again) as was a music hall under his management, the City Hospital fell to the flames (again), and the earlier-spared *Alta California* office was not so lucky this time around.

The phoenix-like Jenny Lind was again rebuilt, this time as a grand edifice of cut stone capable of seating 2,000.[4] The structure was later purchased for $200,000, amidst much controversy, and used as the City Hall.[5]

Seven people were killed, including three by the fire and four by a mob and the police who believed them to be incendiaries. However, it was subsequently shown that one of the latter victims was an ordinary citizen who was on the

[1] Pages 232-233.

[2] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, p. 189.

Further, *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 649-650, included this: "[The Union had] a front of 29 feet on the east side of Kearny Street, between Clay and Washington Streets, and a depth of 160 feet.... Messrs. John Middleton, A.A. Selover and E.V. Joice were the enterprising projectors, builders and owners of this superb concern. The tables were supplied with every imaginable luxury, and the boarders were of the wealthiest and most respectable inhabitants and visitors of the city."

[4] *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 353, noted that the final building of the theatre was opened on October 4, 1851: "This was a large and handsome house. The interior was fitted up with exquisite taste, and all together in size, beauty, and comfort, it rivaled the most noted theatre in the Atlantic states, it could seat comfortably upwards of 2,000 persons. The opening night presented a brilliant sight of beauty and fashion, and every part of the immense building was crowded to excess. A poetical address was delivered on the occasion by Mrs. E. Woodward. A new era in theatricals was now begun in San Francisco. ..."

Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. 265, describes its use as City Hall and how it eventually became "the sorriest of all sink holes."

The rebuilt Jenny Lind Theatre on Portsmouth Square, with the El Dorado gambling hall to its left. The theatre was purchased by the town fathers and used for a long time thereafter as the City Hall. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

scene to help a friend save his building. "Justice" was often swift and occasionally was misdirected.

The burned-out district covered 10 city blocks and parts of six others and ran from between Clay Street and Broadway, nearly to Sansome and Powell streets. About 450 buildings were destroyed, including some temporary structures put up after the last fire, for a loss estimated at about $2,500,000.

San Francisco was not alone in its ordeals by fire, and certain of the outlying towns and mining camps were laid to waste in notable conflagrations. Particularly hard hit was Sacramento, which became so wary following the immense fire on November 2, 1852, which destroyed two-thirds of the city, that afterward several large ships were anchored at the city docks on the river and rented to store merchandise, with the assurance that in case of emergency, their moorings could be cut and the vessels could drift to safety.[1]

Banking in the Early Days

Money greased the skids of life and business in San Francisco. In the city in the 1850s, money more often than not was in the form of gold coins, usually of larger denominations.

Many merchants in San Francisco engaged in forms of banking, such as holding deposits (but not issuing bank notes), providing security service, and other financial specialties.[2] Cross & Co., Macondray & Co.,[3] and Mellus, Howard & Co. were among the firms possessing large safes or vaults and which offered storage facilities for gold dust, coins, and other valuables.

The first significant business in this regard was probably the Exchange and Deposit Office of Henry M. Naglee and Richard H. Sinton opened on January 9, 1849, in the Parker House on Portsmouth Square.[4] Sinton retired the following July, after which the firm was conducted as Naglee & Co., but only for a short time.

Burgoyne & Co. began banking on June 5, 1849, followed in September by B. Davidson & Co., in October by Thomas G. Wells (trading as Wells & Co.), and on December 5 by James King of William & Co. (James King and Jacob R. Snyder). King, considered by some to be the virtual embodiment of a southern "gentleman" in society, had arrived from Virginia, where he had worked for the Post Office and a bank earlier in the decade. He went first to Sacramento in 1848 and later to San Francisco in 1849. The "of William," usually abbreviated by him as "of Wm." in connection with his bank, had been added to his name while he was in the East, to distinguish him from others called James King. Wright & Co., doing business as the Miners Bank, was still another 1849 entry, of which more will be related in Chapter 5.

In February 1850, Drury J. Tallant entered the banking business. Many customers came to his door, and he became one of the more important institutions in the city, later trading as Tallant & Wilde. In June two other firms opened—Felix Argenti & Co. and Page, Bacon & Co.—both of which became well known.

Speculation in land, buildings, and commodities had been rampant in 1849. In 1850 the inevitable day of reckoning came. Under date of September 7, 1850, the *Annals of San Francisco* noted:[5]

> There have been during the past few days a monetary crisis and a great run upon the banks, when one of them, Mr. Henry M. Naglee's, suspended payment today.[6] During the troubled and exciting winter of 1849-1850, speculation had gone beyond all bounds, both in every kind of merchandise and in real estate. When reaction came, prices fell nearly as

[1] *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 344, carried an account of the fire. • Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 1880, pp. 391-392: "When I arrived in the city on the 5th [November 1852, three days after the fire], the business portion of the place, with the exception of here and there a solitary brick house, was one waste of dark desolation. The streets could scarcely be distinguished from the blocks. ... [While San Francisco had its share of fires] in Sacramento they had a succession of both fires and floods. ... I moved to Sacramento City early in December 1852 to assist in rebuilding it. ..."

[2] Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. [illegible]; [illegible] other sources.

[3] Macondray became a very important factor in shipping and [illegible] consignments to many places, including [illegible] the far reaches of the Pacific.

[4] A numismatic account of Naglee is found in Walter Breen's *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, 1988, p. 640; also [illegible] 653 (at a later time Wass, Molitor secured space in a large commercial building owned by Naglee).

[5] Pages 289-290.

[6] "Suspended payment" referred to the banking practice, often temporarily employed, in which insufficient coins were on hand to pay out all of the checks, drafts, and notes presented.

much below the prime cost of goods as previously they had been above it, and in many cases great quantities of merchandise could be had at nominal rates. Real estate, when forced on the market, often did not fetch a tenth of its recent value....

A general financial embarrassment ensued, and numerous bankruptcies of people reputed wealthy followed. Some of the most extensive firms of the city were compelled to assign their property for the benefit of their creditors. Suddenly a panic seized those who held deposits at the different banks, and an immediate 'run' was made on these establishments. Messrs Burgoyne & Co., James King of William, and Wells & Co. nobly met the unexpected demand, and kept their doors open unusual and extra hours to accommodate the half-frantic depositors.

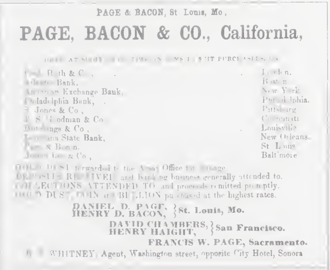
On March 5, 1852, Snyder left the firm of James King of William & Co., and the "& Co." was dropped from the company name. King, with his wife and children, lived in grand style in one of the finest homes in the city. In due course he became prominent on the local scene, served as foreman of the grand jury in San Francisco in 1853, and was widely recognized as an important, knowledgeable, fair-minded man, at least to most people other than certain private minters of gold coins. Within a couple of years he was to become involved in sensational controversy which indirectly played a role in the story of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

In later times, through early 1855, additional entries on the banking scene included Adams & Co.; Carothers, Anderson & Co.; Drexel, Sather & Church; Palmer, Cook & Co.; Robinson & Co. (primarily a savings bank); and Sanders & Brenham, among others.

William Tecumseh Sherman, who came to San Francisco as a banker in the early 1850s, traveling now and again back East (once escaping from the wreck of the Vanderbilt Line's *S.S. Lewis*), described the profession:[1]

At the time of my arrival San Francisco was on the top wave of speculation and prosperity. Major Turner had rented at $600 a month the office formerly used and then owned by Adams & Co., on the east side of Montgomery Street, between Sacramento and California streets. B.R. Nisbet was the active partner, and James Reilly the teller. Already the bank of Lucas, Turner & Co. was established, and was engaged in selling bills of exchange, receiving deposits, and loaning money at 3% a month.

Page, Bacon & Co., and Adams & Co. were in full blast across the street, in Parrott's new granite building, and other bankers were doing seemingly a prosperous business....[2] Turner and I had rooms at Mrs. Ross's and took our meals at restaurants downtown, mostly at a Frenchman's named Martin, on the southwest corner of Montgomery and California streets. General Hitchcock, of the Army, commanding the Department of California, usually messed with us, also a Captain Mason.... We soon secured a small share of business, and became satisfied that there was room for profit. Everybody seemed to be making money fast.


PAGE & BACON, St Louis, Mo,

PAGE, BACON & CO., California,

[illegible]

[illegible] & Co,	London.
[illegible] Bank,	Boston
American Exchange Bank,	New York
Philadelphia Bank,	Philadelphia.
[illegible] Jones & Co,	Pittsburg
[illegible] odman & Co	Cincinnati
[illegible] ings & Co,	Louisville
[illegible] State Bank,	New Orleans
Page & Bacon,	St Louis
[illegible] & Co,	Baltimore

GOLD DUST forwarded to the Assay Office for [illegible]
DEPOSITS RECEIVED and banking business generally attended to.
COLLECTIONS ATTENDED TO and proceeds remitted promptly.
GOLD DUST, COIN and BULLION purchased at the highest rates.

DANIEL D. PAGE, HENRY D. BACON, } St. Louis, Mo.
DAVID CHAMBERS, HENRY HAIGHT, } San Francisco.
FRANCIS W. PAGE, Sacramento.
[illegible] WHITNEY, Agent, Washington street, opposite City Hotel, Sonora

Advertisement for Page, Bacon & Co., a bank based in St. Louis, Missouri. Its San Francisco branch was among the more important financial institutions in the early 1850s, until its failure in 1855. (*Sacramento Directory, 1853-54*)

Sherman represented the home office of Lucas, Turner & Co. in St. Louis, and in San Francisco operated an office for the firm, with B.R. Nisbet as his associate. For a time, business went well:[3]

I soon saw, however, that the 3% charged as a premium on bills of exchange was not all profit, but out of this had to come 1¼ to 1½ for insurance, with some indefinite promise of a return premium. Then there was the cost of blanks, boxing of the bullion, etc. Indeed, I saw no margin for profit. Nisbet, however, who had long been familiar with the business, insisted there was a profit, in the fact that the gold dust or bullion shipped was more valuable than its cost to us. We, of course, had to remit bullion to meet our bills on New York, and bought crude gold dust, or bars refined by Kellogg & Humbert or E. Justh & Co., for at that time the United States Mint was not in operation....

Sherman subsequently determined, Nisbet's comments notwithstanding, that such bullion shipments entailed losses for the firm as the value of money on interest was often 2% a month, more or less.

In 1854-5 the burgeoning economy of San Francisco paused to catch its breath, stumbled, and fell. It has been estimated that by the summer of 1854, of the approximately 1,000 business locations in the city, some 300 were vacant.[4] Among the individuals most severely affected was Henry Meiggs, a highly regarded entrepreneur who operated a saw-

1 *Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, Vol. I, pp. 128-129. Sherman later became famous as a Civil War general and led the march through Georgia which resulted in the destruction of much of Atlanta. His brother, John Sherman, became well known as a legislator from Ohio and was author of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890.

2 *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 414-415, included this under discussion of the events of the year 1852: "At the northwest corner of Montgomery and California streets a large and imposing edifice of granite was erected. This was occupied by Adams & Co., express agents, and Page, Bacon & Co., bankers, and was the first of the superior class of private edifices which are now so numerous in many parts of the city, and particularly on Montgomery Street. The stone for this building was prepared in China and put up in San Francisco by Chinese workmen. It was erected, and is owned by Mr. John Parrott."

3 *Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, Vol. I, p. 131.

4 Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, pp. 433-437, 442 ff.

mill and had other businesses in the North Shore district. The bad times, which resulted in 77 bankruptcies and many more closings in 1854, worsened to 197 bankruptcies in 1855, amounting to liabilities of eight million dollars.

The downturn also affected banking companies, some severely. Many of these companies had acted as depositories for gold and arranged for transport of gold coins, bars, and other forms of bullion from San Francisco by ship to New York, London, and other destinations.

The larger banks all ran into difficulties on and after February 22, 1855, when the San Francisco office of Page, Bacon & Co., headquartered in St. Louis, received news via the *S.S. Oregon* that its main office was insolvent.[1] This precipitated a run on the San Francisco office, and $600,000 was quickly paid out in gold coins. The demands continued, there were no more double eagles available, and the bank was forced to close its doors temporarily for "want of coins." The situation worsened, and the next day, the 23rd, became known in financial annals as the Black Friday of San Francisco. When the dust had settled it was realized that 17 of the city's 19 banks had been forced to close due to lack of gold coins. Of this number, six never reopened, including the formerly prominent Page, Bacon & Co. and Adams & Co.[2] Among the survivors was Lucas, Turner & Co., managed by Sherman and Nisbet.

Sherman later penned memoirs of his life including his stint as a Gold Rush banker. He quoted a panicky Frenchman who had waited in a long line at Sherman's bank, seeking to withdraw his funds in the form of gold coins before the institution collapsed—which he hoped it wouldn't do at least until after he reached the cashier's pay-out window. Upon reaching the head of the line and being pleasantly surprised that, indeed, coins were readily available, the Frenchman remarked, "If you got the money, I no want him; but, if you no got him, I want him like the devil."[3] Meanwhile, the firm paid out all the gold coins on hand, then delivered an additional $75,000 in gold bars. Still in need of money, Sherman arranged to acquire funds owed to the bank from debtors including Major R.P. Hammond, collector of the port of San Francisco, who:[4]

> handed me his check, signed as collector of the port, on Major John R. Snyder, United States treasurer, for $40,000. I afterward rode out, that night, to Major Snyder's house on North Beach, saw him, and he agreed to meet me at 8 a.m. next day at the United States Mint, and pay the check so I could have the money before the bank opened. The next morning, as agreed on, we met, and he paid me the check in two sealed bags of gold coin, each marked "twenty thousand dollars,"[5] which I carried to the bank, but never opened them, or even broke the seals.

What was left of the business of Adams & Co. was taken over by Wells, Fargo & Co., a firm that had been organized on March 18, 1852, in New York City as a joint stock company.[6] In July 1852 it had opened an office in San Francisco for express service and general banking. Before long, Wells, Fargo gained a firm niche in American history, in particular hitting its stride when the vast Comstock Lode district in the Washoe area of Nevada Territory was opened in 1859, creating boom times in the 1860s. Today, the firm is the best remembered of any that did business during the Gold Rush. Sherman's bank, Lucas, Turner & Co., remained active in San Francisco until May 1, 1857, when it closed up its offices, paid its creditors, did its best to collect outstanding debts, and transferred its business to the banking house of Parrott & Co.[7] A few years later, Sherman marched off to war and to his own niche in American history.

James King of William

By 1855 banker James King of William had been induced—deceptively, he later stated—to merge his firm into Adams & Co., after which his investment was lost with the Adams bankruptcy. Charges and countercharges were bandied about, including in published advertisements in the newspapers. Finally, King was challenged to a duel by Alfred A. Cohen, an Adams principal who believed he was defamed, but King declined on the grounds that his duty to his family came first and that he felt that dueling was morally wrong. Besides, the State Constitution made dueling a felony crime. Regardless, southern gentlemen such as King *always* accepted such challenges, it was said, and there was some disappointment that the contest would not take place. San Franciscans always seemed to enjoy *someone else* in a predicament, such as a duel, or other *things* in trouble, as the spectacle of a wild bear chained to a wild bull in an arena. Perhaps such happenings provided an outlet for the rigors of everyday life in the Gold Rush era.

James King of William, disappointed at having had most of his net worth wiped out in the banking debacle, turned to other projects. On October 8, 1855, he launched a newspaper, the *Daily Evening Bulletin*, which became known popularly as the *Bulletin*. Angered by his previous victimization in banking, and believing that banking, politics, and

1. A detailed account of the travails of Page, Bacon & Co. is given in *Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, pp. 136 ff. At the time St. Louis was the primary financial center of the upper Mississippi River basin. As noted, Sherman's firm, Lucas, Turner & Co., also had its headquarters in St. Louis.

2. Dwight L. Clarke, *William Tecumseh Sherman: Gold Rush Banker*, 1969, p. 118. • Curiously, although Page's headquarters in St. Louis had become insolvent, on its own the San Francisco branch could have survived the financial storm had it been an independent institution.

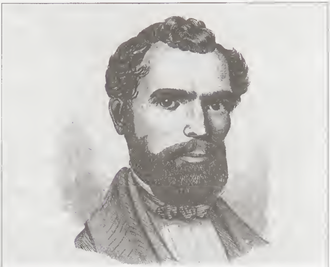
3. *Personal Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, Vol. I, p. 142, widely cited later, *e.g.*, by Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. 447.

4. *Personal Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, p. 143.

5. This would have been two bags each containing 1,000 gold double eagles.

6. Beebe and Clegg, *U.S. West: The Saga of Wells Fargo*, p. 308.

7. *Personal Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, Vol. I, p. 161.



James King of William, who came to San Francisco from northern Virginia, became one of the city's most prominent citizens. In the early 1850s he operated the Banking House of James King of Wm. Later, he published the *San Francisco Bulletin.* After King's death in 1856, the editorship of the paper passed to James Nisbet, a writer who had been a co-author of *The Annals of San Francisco.* On July 30, 1865, Nisbet was a passenger aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* (*California's Pictorial Letter Sheets*)

several other aspects of San Francisco life were patently corrupt, he lashed out with a stream of invective-filled articles, often expressed clearly and even perhaps accurately in some instances, but in the process creating great animosity from those mentioned negatively. The *Bulletin* went from one sensational story to another giving its own version of what was right and what was wrong, and who should be convicted, exposed, thrown out of office, or held responsible. "There's no use in trying to dodge the *Bulletin*," the paper purred grandly.

The final straw came when James P. Casey, a San Francisco supervisor, was exposed as having been a past inmate of Sing Sing Prison in New York. Casey was the publisher of a poor and unreliable newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, and was generally regarded as a worthless, disreputable fellow. No matter that certain other San Francisco papers criticized Casey as well; James King of William did it with a particular vengeance.

On May 14, 1856, Casey visited King's office, had an altercation, and departed. About an hour later, shortly after 5:00 p.m., King left his own office, only to encounter Casey as he unexpectedly stepped from behind an express wagon standing on Montgomery Street. Casey fired a shot from his Navy revolver, wounding his target. After considerable suffering King slipped to his death on May 20. Gloom prevailed throughout San Francisco, and in death King was eulogized as one of the great men of the city. James Nisbet, who was to figure in the saga of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* nearly a decade later, assumed the editorship of the *Bulletin*.

Meanwhile, in the Armchair

While debauchery, dissipation, and plain old fun in California grabbed headlines in the mid-1850s and formed the prime focal point for many later historians, many if not most residents were law-abiding, went about their business in a normal (as per the standards of the East) manner, and even attended churches and synagogues.

Those who did not spend their evenings under crystal chandeliers in gaming halls or in front of the mirror and whiskey bottles in saloons, found much time to read. Responding to a public need, the Mercantile Library Association was formed, and on January 25, 1853, officers were elected. The *Annals of San Francisco* told the story:[2]

> It had long been evident that such an association was much needed in San Francisco. In the absence of anything like a home or domestic comfort, all classes seem to be alike forced to frequent places of public recreation, and were exposed to the many degrading influences, which drink, gambling, and still worse vices have upon the personal character. To withdraw youths in particular from the haunts of dissipation, and to give to persons of every age and occupation the means of mental improvement, and a suitable place for passing their leisure hours, were the great objects of the Mercantile Library Association....
>
> The rooms of the association, which were on the second floor of the California Exchange, a central and most convenient locality, were first opened on the evening of March 1, 1853. The largest apartment was elegantly fitted up as a reading and lecture room, was abundantly supplied with local newspapers and with some of the leading journals of the eastern states, as well as with a choice selection of magazines and reviews. The library contained 1500 volumes by the best authors, and was being constantly increased by donations and purchases. Only one year later, it numbered about 3000 volumes, comprising many of the best standard works in the English language, besides many valuable works in French, Spanish, German, etc.
>
> The institution is of the most excellent character, and deserves the active support and well wishes of every liberal-minded citizen. It is the best substitute for a portion of the comforts of home that can be provided in the present condition of San Francisco. Occasional lectures on interesting topics, literary and dramatic essays and readings, and frequent public debates on political and other subjects of the day, give variety and excitement to the ordinary business of the association...The terms of membership are very moderate, being an entrance fee of $10 (since reduced to $5 'for clerks and others in employ'), and a monthly payment of $1....
>
> The library and reading rooms are open every day from 9 o'clock AM to 10 o'clock PM. For two hours after noon they are only open to ladies, and gentlemen accompanying ladies. The chambers of the association are now [in 1855 when *Annals* was published] in the Court Block, Merchant Street.

Further reflective of the desire to read, on April 5, 1856, Franklin A. Buck, in the lumber and other trades in the foothills of the Sierras, wrote to his sister Mary who was still back in his hometown of Bucksport, Maine:

[1] Issue of November 7, 1855.
[2] Pages 428-429.

> I have just gotten the March number of *Harper's*. I like all of it. Every piece is interesting, but the Easy Chair is good. His ideas on the fashions and follies of society are true to the letter. The foreign gossip always amuses me. I like Little Dorrit so far very well.
>
> I have only seen one extract from Hiawatha. I don't think much of it. Some of the parodies on it are good. "The Song of Pinky Winky" is the best I have seen.[1]

Reading continued to be a very popular pastime in the cities and mining camps and was the ideal way to while away the evening hours. Popular magazines and books enjoyed wide sales and distribution. Just about every large hotel had a reading room and featured it in advertising. Various fraternal groups, societies, and even fire stations had shelves of books on hand plus piles of newspapers, local and from the East.

Mail from the East

During the 1850s "Steamer Day" was always an occasion for excitement. Sidewheel steamers, including the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, were the lifeblood of commerce, and many events in life hinged on their arrival and departure. Such vessels were the main link with distant ports and with the outside world.

In 1849, Sweeny & Baugh commenced the operation of a semaphore device on Telegraph Hill, not far from Portsmouth Square, to display ship information received by flag signals from distant Point Lobos at the harbor entrance. On Telegraph Hill overlooking the commercial district of the city a large pole was fitted with two large black arms. When the Point Lobos lookout saw a vessel coming into San Francisco Bay, an appropriate signal would be transmitted by flags and seen through a telescope by an observer on the hill, after which the semaphore signal would be given for all to see. Arms stretched straight out to each side of the pole indicated a sidewheel steamer, the most popular of all categories of arrivals.[2] The flag signals from Point Lobos were made redundant by an electric telegraph wire on September 11, 1853, but the semaphore signals on the hill continued.

Historian Theodore H. Hittell described a related incident:[3]

> The signal for a sidewheel steamer...was the two arms extended on opposite sides at right angles to the pole, and whenever this signal was seen there was general excitement and a rush to the wharf to see friends or to hear the news or to go to the Post Office to get letters.
>
> A ludicrous incident, illustrating the familiarity of everybody with the signal, occurred at one of the theatres a year or two later. The play was Sheridan's *Hunchback*, and the house was crowded from pit to dome.
>
> Julia had quarreled with Clifford, when Master Walter, dressed in black which showed in bold relief against the light walls of the drawing room, excitedly rushed on the stage and throwing out his arms, exclaimed, "What does this mean?"
>
> For a moment there was no response, when a voice from the gallery roared out, "Side-wheel steamer!"
>
> The house burst into shouts of laughter, and for many minutes Master Walter could not go on with his speech.

Throughout the decade of the 1850s steamers such as the *California, Golden Age, Golden Gate, Sonora,* and *J.L. Stephens* would arrive in port from Central America, bringing mail that had left New York City about 24 to 26 days earlier. A reflection of the scene is provided by this account in *Hutchings' California Magazine,* January 1858:[4]

> Language is incapable of expressing the thrill of feeling which passes through the mind, when from the outer telegraph station at Point Lobos, a telegram announces in San Francisco that "the mail steamer – in sight [distance here] miles outside the heads."

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[1] The March issue contained 144 pages of editorial and illustrative material, enough to keep a gold miner busy reading for days, and included these articles (in order of appearance): "The Juniata" (about the Pennsylvania river of the same name), "Commodore Perry's Expedition to Japan" (a lengthy article with many engravings depicting life in Japan, a society not well known to Americans), "The Story of the Whale" (characteristics of whales, how they are hunted, etc., with engravings of dramatic scenes including a whale grasping a small boat in its jaws), "Passages of Eastern Travel" (journeys in Egypt), "The Senses, Part II, Smell" (the olfactory sense, its effects, advantages, etc.), "Cinderella, Not a Fairy Tale" (story of a housekeeper in an artist's studio), "The 'Gees" ("Gees," or seamen, a humorous view of their characteristics), "A Pistol-Shot at the Duelists" (discussion of dueling, techniques and history), "The Terrible Tree" (a ghost story, sort of, involving a dispirited fellow in a college town in a cold January and a lightning-struck sycamore tree), "The Dragon Fang Possessed by the Conjuror Piou-Lu" (story set in China), "Little Dorrit," Chapters IX and X (Charles Dickens' book-length story being serialized in *Harper's*), "Monthly Record of Current Events" (news from around the United States, followed by items concerning Mexico, Central America, South America, Europe, The Eastern War [in Russia], and China), "Literary Notices" (lengthy discussion of Thomas Babington Macaulay and his *History of England*), "Editor's Table" (reflections on the desirability of a comfortable life in a pleasant home), "Editor's Easy Chair" (subtitled "Our Foreign Gossip," a section enjoyed by Franklin Buck; this issue emphasized life in Paris with its social peculiarities), "Editor's Drawer" (interesting scraps, miscellany, news, poetry, humor, etc.), "Windology" (two pages, each with eight humorous cartoon panels illustrating the humor of different kinds of "winds," such as "an ill wind that blows nobody good"), and "Fashions for March" (a full page engraving of a lady in a promenade costume followed by a page of text). Regarding *Hiawatha*, this comment seems to be in reply to something that sister Mary had written about; there was no feature on *Hiawatha* in the March *Harper's*, but the January issue had contained a review of it. "The Song of Pinky Winky" comment is untraced.

[2] Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. [illegible]; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, p. 155. An illustration of the various types, "Sweeny & Baugh's Marine Telegraph Signals," is reprinted in Beebe and Clegg, *U.S. West: The Saga of Wells Fargo*, p. 35. Signals in the order shown: Side Wheel Steamer, Propeller, Brig, Brigantine, Schooner, Sloop, Vessel in Distress Outside [the San Francisco Bay], and Vessel in Distress Inside. Another signal indicated the name of the arriving ship. National colors indicated the country of origin. • A brief history of Sweeny & Baugh is given in Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 565. Sweeny & Baugh were proprietors of the highly successful Merchants' Exchange, a gathering and relaxation facility for businessmen. • Additional information concerning Telegraph Hill and its signals is found in *Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 465-466.

[3] *History of California*, Vol. III, p. 349. A variation of this tale is told in Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 269-270.

[4] See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, p. 235, for a related account of the excitement occasioned by steamer arrivals; also *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 270 ff.

A steamer arriving in the port of San Francisco from Panama or Nicaragua, always an occasion for excitement. Aboard were newspapers and letters from the East as well as bright-eyed adventurers eager to make their fortunes in the gold fields. (*California Life Illustrated*)

To almost all "expectation is on tiptoe," and the welcome intelligence is rapidly passed from lip to lip, and recorded on various bulletin boards of the city.... After an hour or more of suspense, the loud boom-oom-oom-o-o-o-o-m of the steamer's gun reverberates through the city, and announces that she is passing between Alcatraz Island and Telegraph Hill, and will soon be at her berth alongside the wharf.

Almost simultaneously with the sound of the steamer's gun, the newsboys are shouting the "arrival of the steamer" and the *New York Herald*, *New York Tribune*, "14 days later news from the eastern states."[1] Meanwhile, all the news depots are crowded with eager applicants for the latest news; and in order to obtain it as early as possible, small boats have been waiting off Meiggs Wharf to receive the bundles of "express" newspapers thrown them from the steamer as she passed. The moment these boats touch the dock, fast horses which have also been kept in waiting speedily carry these bundles to the city.

Carriages and other vehicles now begin to rumble and clatter through the streets in the direction of the steamer's wharf, more commonly walking toward the Post Office, or gather in groups upon the sidewalks, to discuss the latest news. [illegible] seem to become general. On the dock awaiting the delivery of the mail bags, mail wagons and drays are standing, and as fast as the mail matter is taken from the vessel, it is carried to the Post Office.

While the loaded wagons and drays with mail matter are hastening to the general delivery, and the passengers who have just arrived are seeking the various hotels in carriages or on foot, after hiring a porter to carry their luggage, or becoming their own porters for the time being, let us go to the Post Office to observe the scene there which is one of excitement.

San Francisco citizens wishing to send mail back to the East could drop letters at the Post Office to catch a steamer to Panama or Nicaragua, with such shipments leaving twice monthly, on the 5th and 20th at the time, or in another year on the 1st and 16th. Steamer Day was also the time when many bills and payments came due and financial accounts were settled.

Showcasing the *Brother Jonathan*

The excitement of Steamer Day, in this instance showcasing an outbound vessel, formed a full chapter in the first substantial book ever written about the history of the city, *The Annals of San Francisco*, by Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, M.D., and Frank Nisbet. And, as good fortune (in relation to the present book) would have it, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was the *one ship* that was featured. Come, now, and join the crowd at the wharf in San Francisco on this joyous occasion. The writer demonstrates his keen knowledge of human personality and foibles:[2]

"All is eagerness and excitement"

Once a fortnight, at the beginning and middle of every month, San Francisco, which is never without some feverish excitement, gets gradually worked up to a crisis. Different places have also their occasional periods of intense interest. What in other countries may be the annual fair to a village belle, a great saint's day of obligation to devout Roman Catholics, the solitary "cheap pleasure trip" to the artisan who has toiled and moiled unceasingly for a twelvemonth, the last day of grace to a tottering merchant who must meet his bill—but what need is there of comparisons? STEAMER-DAY in San Francisco stands alone; it is *sui generis*. Everybody, man, woman, and child, native and foreigner, merchant and miner, general dealer, laborer, and nondescript adventurer, old resident, and recent immigrant—*everybody* is deeply interested in this day....

Always two, and often three, large vessels leave upon that occasion, conveying together from a thousand to sometimes nearly two thousand persons. That alone is an immense body of people, who are naturally very much excited by thoughts of the long passage and the peculiar circumstances attending their departure. Besides these it may be supposed that at least thrice the same number of persons are directly interested as the nearest friends of the actual passengers, while the whole city entertains some kind of curiosity as to who are leaving and a general feeling of interest on the subject.

Numbers have come from the mines and interior towns to take their departure from San Francisco; and these crowd the hotels and boarding houses for a few days until the steamer sails. From every large lodging house there is somebody departing, while in almost every house there are companions and confidants to those leaving. These must commune and prepare; they must drink, smoke, and palaver; buy and interchange gifts, and make solemn promises of future communications. All is eagerness and excitement, on both sides, until Steamer Day has come and gone.

The Day of Departure

Follow the crowd on the eventful day. The merchant has dispatched his letters, his expresses, his remittances, and has now a little leisure. So he takes a stroll down to the pier-head to see some old friends off. The mailbags are closed, and the anxious correspondent with home may now begin to count the weary weeks and days before he receives fond answers. He also can spare an hour, and dreamily wends his way to mark the noble ship set sail that bears the mail, *his* letters included.

[1] Fourteen days refers to the time elapsed since the mail left Panama, not the time in transit from New York City.

[2] "Steamer-Day," *The Annals of San Francisco*, pp. 626 ff. Subtitles added

The express wagons that bear two millions of treasure are on their way. The loafer and the compulsorily idle man likewise attend, because they are fond of a show and have nothing else to do.

General business is in some measure suspended, or lazily conducted until the steamer is actually gone. The baggage of the passengers, which is seldom very much, is being conveyed on board. Some adieus have already taken place; but most are to be made upon the wharf or on the ship's deck. The mail boat for Panama starts from Pacific Street Wharf; the opposition vessel, for San Juan del Sud[1] (Nicaragua route), from the wharf at Jackson Street. Let us take our stand on the latter. As it happens, the ship is neither the largest nor the fastest of the line, yet it is an excellent boat notwithstanding, and we have a friend on board who is leaving for the East.

Crowds Gather

The *Brother Jonathan* is already beginning to be crowded. Above and below, passengers with flushed faces and scarcely steady steps are prowling among the heaps of packages and boxes, searching for their own. They bustle about, and after some thick speechifying and unnecessary gestures discover their "bunks," and secure their "traps" as closely as possible. All is confusion. Something is sure to be forgotten at the last moment; something of the utmost consequence is still to be done. There is neither time nor fit person to do the thing needful; and the unhappy passenger dare not leave the ship for an instant, lest she sail without him. There is, however, no real danger of that, though there is so much fear.

One half of the passengers are still on the wharf, talking fast and hurriedly with friends, and preparing to take the last farewells. On board, a majority of the people are those who have only come to see the emigrant off. Small groups cluster wherever there is standing room on the different decks. The bottle is produced, and the last drop taken; champagne freely flows among the state-cabin nabobs, and rum or ready-mixed bottled cocktails among the snobs over all the ship. But we forget—in California happily all are equal and independent, and there can be neither the pure snob nor nabob, where originally all came alike penniless, and nearly all who make money do it "by the sweat of their brow." Well, some continue poor, and some wax wealthy. Some have been industrious and thrifty, enterprising, and successful: these soon grow rich. Others have been lazy and idle, perhaps weak, sick or incapable, or they have spent their gains in intemperance, gaming or debauchery; and these will never make or long keep a fortune in any country. Among them all, some can and do pay for state cabins, other can, but will not; a considerable number ought not, but do; while the most cannot, and consequently do not. All, however, are rejoiced to hold their friends to the last, and seek to show their joy in various ways—in cheerful discourse and in drinks, in a warm shake of the hand, a half-stifled sigh and a heartfelt look.

Soon after a sidewheel steamer arrived in port, citizens formed long lines at the San Francisco Post Office to claim letters and packages from the East. (*California Life Illustrated*)

Near the forecastle there is a group of shaggy-haired and bronzed-faced though good-looking fellows. These are going home with the profits of a successful trip to the mines. They still wear the old red or blue woolen shirt, the battered hat and the belt of the digger. Somewhere hidden about their persons are certain little bags with 50 or 100 ounces of the "dust," say, or perhaps 500 ounces, for aught that a stranger could tell.[2] They conceal likewise a five or six-shooter, or a brace of pistols, capped and loaded with ball, or it may be a formidable blade that makes the blood run cold to touch. Sometimes indeed these weapons are openly displayed. Such men shall not be robbed of their hard won treasure without making some effort to save it, or they will have dire revenge at all events for their loss. There may not be much risk, once on board, and on the fair way to a law-protected land; but habit is a second nature, and still they bear the old faithful companions of their toils and dangers. These determined "b'hoys" are the fortunate and careful miners.

Classes of Passengers on the *Brother Jonathan*

Beside them are others of a different stamp. The hollow cheek, sunken eye and feeble gait tell of broken constitutions. Sickness seized the hapless adventurer at the mines, just when the foundation of his "pile" was being laid famously. There was a struggle for a little while between avarice and the longing for health and life. Disease threatened the latter in unmistakable symptoms. The patient was unwillingly forced to relinquish his best hopes, and drag himself to town for advice and aid. He continued weak, and was becoming poor—for doctors' bills are heavy in California. So while he could still muster strength and pay his passage, he resolved to go home, to see old friends, his mother and the sweetheart he had been betrothed to, and then "go sleep with his fathers."

The mining class form a large portion of the forecabin and steerage passengers. Many of these, since their first coming to California, had visited "the States" on previous occasions. They took *seasons* of working at the mines, and passed the intervals in making jaunts home and enjoying themselves with their families and friends. When the annual period came round, like regular birds of passage, they migrated once more to the foothills and valleys of the Sierra Nevada, to labor hard for so many months, accumulate another nice little "heap," then descend upon San Francisco, to leave it shortly afterwards upon Steamer Day.

[1] Also called San Juan del Sur; both spellings are correct although Sud was used more often. [illegible] San Juan del Sud.

[2] Such [illegible] referred to as "passenger gold," [illegible] was usually in the form of coins; [illegible] the better.

There are numerous enfeebled, dispirited-looking passengers in the fore part of the vessel. These are the disappointed. They came to California, mistaking the country and miscalculating their own powers and the opposition before them. Perhaps they were without the physical qualifications for work, or some nicety of disposition or false pride prevented them from doing what their most successful neighbors had had to do at a pinch—turn their hand to any supposed mean occupation for a bare living. These sad and often seedy-looking mortals had, it might be, visited the mining country; they looked on for a time—wrought a day or two, perhaps only an hour, till their bones ached and their backs seemed breaking. Then they roared a curse against the *mirage* of gold, and set off to San Francisco. They had still a little money remaining of their first capital; but billiard rooms and bars, and the numerous other places for extracting cash from the idle and foolish, were rapidly reducing the amount.

They made application for situations of different kinds, but they showed little energy even in that, and somehow they were unsuccessful. They had not the courage to offer to make, or to carry, bricks, or lime, to break up the French monopoly and blacken boots[1] or hawk coals, keep a stall, slaughter a cow, or feed pigs, help to lighten a ship's hold, serve as waiter at an eating-house, or start into the interior and learn to plough, sow and reap, set and dig potatoes, or herd cattle. Some of these honest though supposed inferior occupations may always be depended upon by the truly industrious in San Francisco, while nobody need *long* remain in the despised situation, if his real abilities, energy and good conduct deserve promotion to a better. Our good-for-nothing fellows, however, would descend to nothing so "low." *Low*, indeed! As if they were the porcelain of the old world, and their nearest neighbors were only common delf.

Well, time and their money were silently and rapidly disappearing. At last a more vigorous effort than usual made them resolve to "shake the dust from their feet," and go home, with the faintest possible hope of having the "fatted calf" slain on their reappearance there. Importunities had probably coaxed or forced a few dollars from an old friend who was "doing well" in San Francisco, and these, with the scanty sum left of their own means, just paid up the reduced amount of passage money. Such unfortunates carry away a poor impression of the country. [illegible] serve only to make themselves ridiculous among those who know the [illegible] character of the [illegible].

Visiting the East

The thriving artisan who is paid so liberally for his services and all the classes in turn occasionally visit "the States." Health or business, pleasure or personal duty and love to the dear absent, lead most of the more respectable people to leave the city for a few months once in every two years or so. There is likewise always a moderate number of officials, either of the city or State, or in the general government, who must occasionally pay a visit to the eastern capitals. Then sometimes comedians and other public performers, "stars" in their way, and a few "swells" and dandies of the "Sydney cove" school, a company of Uncle Sam's soldiers, a clique of filibustering speculators, bound ultimately for God knows what unprotected country, and many other curious characters book themselves for berths. A continued migration, backwards and forwards, is taking place.

Of all those leaving, probably one-third are sure to return within a few months. The voyage is long and inconvenient, with its own dangers too; but the voyager and the friends he is about to leave do not imagine that their separation will be eternal. There are only some contingencies in the way which tend to give their parting the slightest dash of melancholy. This, however, is usually mixed and disguised by a deal of gleesome envy and banter on the part of him that stays, and much eager, joyous hope in him that goes. Generally there are a few ladies among the passengers, though they are nearly lost to sight among the dark crowd of the "lords of creation." The female passengers have commonly a few friends of their own sex who sometimes attend and see them fairly off.

A considerable number of the passengers are foreigners; and while most of these first visit the eastern states, they intend to travel much farther. In New York and the Atlantic ports, they will find abundant and cheap opportunities of reaching their "Beautiful France," or "Dear Father-land," or "Old England." They generally bear away a fair share of the golden spoil, and it is doubtful whether many of them will ever return. Boon companions and tried old mates of their own country witness their departure, and cheerfully congratulate them on the prospect of being soon again in a peaceful, happy home with "the old familiar faces."

The *Brother Jonathan* Casts Off

But leviathan begins to blow and heave uneasily, eager to be off. The escape steam-pipe seems too narrow a throat for the angry breath of the monster, and loudly threatens to burst, and the mighty hulk quivers at the sound. The clamor strengthens on deck. The mate begins to move about and shout, and the men leap to obey his orders. The chief engineer and his aides are at their posts, awaiting the word of command from the captain, who at last condescends to enter on the scene of action. A rapid shuffling of feet is heard, baggage is unceremoniously tumbled aside, sailors handle the hawsers, and laggers rush hastily to the wharf. The last drop has been drunk, the last goodbye given. The wharf is densely crowded with spectators, while the voyagers everywhere occupy the different decks of the magnificent ship. There are a few turns ahead of the paddlewheels, and then a few turns astern; the creature is lazily stretching its gigantic limbs before it begins serious work. The cables are cast loose, and leviathan yawns, and slowly drags its ponderous length half round.

There is meanwhile a general stillness observed by the spectators both on board and on the wharf. Their kind wishes, remembrances, orders, farewells had all been given; and the heart was too full, or the eye too busily engaged with the ever attractive scene, to permit further active demonstrations. Only a few unsentimental wretches will persist in bawling an untimeous coarse witticism, and shout still more "God-bless-ye's" between the ship and the wharf. Perhaps a passenger, already "half seas over," in the delirium of his joy and drink, will toss his hat to a friend whom he is sorrowfully leaving, as a token of his last affection; or the deserted crony will throw his own "tile" towards the "bosom friend" of many tipsy hours. Three to one, these last fond memorials drop short into the water. Sometimes quite a brisk fire will be thus kept up for a quarter of an hour, while the ship is getting under way; and

[1] Many if not most bootblacks on the streets of San Francisco were of French nationality.

[2] In recent times American soldiers of fortune had invaded and attempted to set themselves up as rulers of certain districts to the south, namely Nicaragua and in Mexico the state of Sonora.

oranges, hats, sometimes coats even, last notes and packets, jokes and repartees, will fly from man to man across the widening space that separates the parties. Such noisy salutations and gifts, however, are in the end confined to a few.

During the last 10 minutes the passengers are forming into a close line, and lean across the rails. Occasionally they appear to whisper to each other about the incidents passing a few yards off. Now one, and then another, bows to some friend in the crowd, whose eye he could not resist catching once again, while a faint, half joyous, half melancholy smile plays upon his face. The friend answers the familiar nod, and seeks to avoid meeting any more the gaze of the departing.

Outward Bound

Slowly and heavily, leviathan splashes and plunges; it moves round the outer end of the pier till its head is clear of the farther wharf. Then the great heart ceases for a moment to beat, mustering its energies for the coming race. The excitement among all increases. Now the ponderous iron beams slowly rise and fall. For a moment there is no perceptible motion of the ship. The excitement is intense. Then one sharp eye, and next another, discovers and proclaims loudly that the large hulk is really moving.

Onward—slowly, slowly—a little faster, though still but slowly—then moderately—a little faster, though still but slowly—then moderately—a little more quickly—then faster, proudly, triumphantly, with a continually accelerating speed! Oh, it is a beautiful, a grand sight, such a majestic vessel exerting its enormous power, and growing by the moment in strength and swiftness!

So soon as the ship is seen to be really moving ahead the interest of the spectators is at the height. Hats, caps, handkerchiefs, hands, are eagerly waved, and a multitude of cheerful voices bid a long farewell. The travelers gaily show like decorations of interest and friendship. A few tears moisten the eyes of the more sensitive. With one general impulse, three hearty cheers are given by the forsaken, which the departing as heartily return.

As the loud huzzas die away, and the sullen crash of the paddles is beginning to be distinguished, smoke is observed near the bow of the ship, and at almost the same instant the boom of a cannon-shot is heard, which thunders and re-thunders among the cliffs of Clark's Point—and the steamer has fairly started. For a few minutes afterwards the eager crowds can mark the tall masts and the fluttering pennant, till the ship gradually bends oceanward, and Telegraph Hill hides her farther progress through the Golden Gate. Then with a long-drawn breath—a genuine sigh, or a laugh, the multitude bustle and hurry off to their proper kinds of business, to forget all about the event and their emotions, until some subsequent steamer-day recalls these to mind, by circumstances of a similar nature.

The Golden Steamships

From the 1850s onward, steamers bound from San Francisco to distant ports often carried vast amounts of gold coins and bullion. It was not at all uncommon for a vessel to contain upward of $1 million of what was proudly proclaimed as "treasure" in advertisements and shipping notices. Indeed, the writer of the preceding account about the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* observed that "the express wagons that bear two millions of treasure are on their way" to stow it aboard the ship.

In the early days, 1850-4, such treasure mostly consisted of gold ingots and bars mixed with privately minted gold coins. Coins were scarce, and most gold was in bar form, saving the expense of coinage. Besides, in London and other foreign ports, gold bars imprinted with the stamps of respected assayers were preferred to coins.

After the San Francisco Mint began producing gold coins in spring 1854, the gold $20 double eagle became the denomination of choice for transport as well as for use in large domestic transactions. Thus, the *S.S. Central America,* which went down in a storm off the Atlantic Coast on September 12, 1857, was reported to have had thousands of freshly minted double eagles aboard, these having been shipped from San Francisco by way of Panama.

The transport of "treasure" was openly advertised and discussed in San Francisco newspapers for an extended period of years. While today this might seem to have been a breach of security, at the time it was viewed as a publicity benefit. Any ship worthy of carrying gold treasure would surely be safe and pleasant for passengers, and its operators would be perceived as being financially sound. Even during the parlous times of the Civil War it was not unusual to state that a ship carried hundreds of thousands of dollars or even over a million dollars in gold. As will be recounted in Chapter 9, such notices did not go unread by certain conniving San Franciscans, namely Messrs. Greathouse, Harpending, and Rubery.

The addition of the word *Golden* to a ship's name was always a drawing card, and such vessels as the *Golden City, Golden Gate,* and the *Golden Age* each played a part in San Francisco history. The *S.S. Golden Rule* was on the opposite side of the continent on the Atlantic run, but no doubt it gave passengers en route to California a sense of spirit early in their travels, that is, until it was unceremoniously wrecked on a reef in the Caribbean Sea.

Other Ships

Many other ships coming into and going out of the harbor of San Francisco were less exciting to the public than were gold-laden sidewheel steamers, but they brought necessary and highly prized freight and supplies from various parts of the globe.

From New York City by ship came many consumer goods including furniture, clothing, household utensils, ornaments and fancy goods, musical instruments, prints and engravings, books from leading publishers, spices and food-stuffs, and other items. By the mid 1850s, just about any nicety available in a fine hotel or restaurant in Boston or New York was readily obtainable in San Francisco as well. Fancy and fashion goods from London and Paris arrived by ship and were stocked in local stores.

Ice was imported in large quantities from Boston, traversing around Cape Horn in 1851 in vessels operated by

Ferdinand Vassault and others. In 1853 there were five ice ships on the route. In 1854, quantities of ice were shipped to the city from Sitka by the Russian-American Trading Company.[1] In San Francisco as well as inland cities such as Sacramento and Marysville, ice cream cooled by the product of the winters of Massachusetts was a favorite treat.

Quantities of bituminous coal were found to the north near Puget Sound and brought to San Francisco, where the fuel found ready use in the bins of steamers. Larger supplies were brought by ship from eastern ports, including from the Cumberland mines, exported through Baltimore. Wood, always in rather short supply in San Francisco in the 1850s, was brought down from points along the northern coast of California and Oregon. Fruit and vegetables arrived from the Sandwich Islands across the Pacific.

Elegant clipper ships were often used for high-value commercial cargo on the route from the East around Cape Horn and in the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco west across the sea to China. One of the most exciting clipper sagas was the maiden voyage of McKay's graceful *Flying Cloud*, which made the transit from New York to San Francisco in only 89 days and 13 hours, a record which stood until 1854. More often, the trip was made in 100 to 110 days, a great improvement of the pre-clipper times of a decade earlier when 200 days was considered fair.[2]

A contemporary view of these majestic vessels, indeed a paean to their beauty and glory, is provided by the *Annals of San Francisco* published in 1855:[3]

> Records kept by the late harbormaster, Captain King, reveal that 74 vessels "claiming and entitled to be called clipper ships, and averaging rather more than 1,000 tons burden, had arrived in the port of San Francisco during the last three years." The records commenced with the brig *Col. Fremont*, May 1849, and included the *Aramingo*, which arrived in May 1852.
>
> The average passage from New York was 125 days. Some of the ships were much faster. The *Flying Cloud*, which arrived in port on August 1851, made the passage in just 89 days. The *Sword Fish*, also from New York, came into San Francisco in February 1852 after 90 days. The *Surprise*, from New York, arriving in March 1851, came in 96 days; and the *Sea Witch*, also from New York, July 1850, came in 97 days. In February 1852, the *Flying Fish*, out of Boston, made the trip to San Francisco in 98 days.
>
> The *clipper ship* is virtually the creation of San Francisco. The necessity of bearing merchandise as speedily as possible to so distant a market, one too which is so liable to be suddenly overstocked by goods, early forced merchants and shipbuilders interested in the California trade to invent new and superior models of vessels. Hence the modern clipper with the great length, sharp lines of entrance and clearance, and flat bottom. These magnificent vessels now perform the longest regular voyage known in commerce, running along both coasts of the Americas in four months, while the ordinary ships of older times used to take seven or eight months to accomplish the same distance. The contrast is very striking between the short, clumsy vessels of a few hundred tons burden, which brought the early European navigators to the coast of California, and the large and beautifully lined marine palaces, often of two thousand tons, that are now continually gliding through the Golden Gate. These are like the white-winged masses of cloud that majestically soar on the summer breeze...

A fully-rigged clipper ship in the sea off of California in the 1850s. Clippers regularly ran to New York, Boston, China, and other distant ports. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

The Pony Express and the Telegraph

The reliance upon steamers for news from New York, Boston, and other far-away cities was a hardship for San Franciscans. In the East just about every medium-size town was connected by telegraph and railroad, while in the West such connections were intermittent. The speeding of communications became a challenge for many entrepreneurs, and even a day or two shaved off the time was an accomplishment.

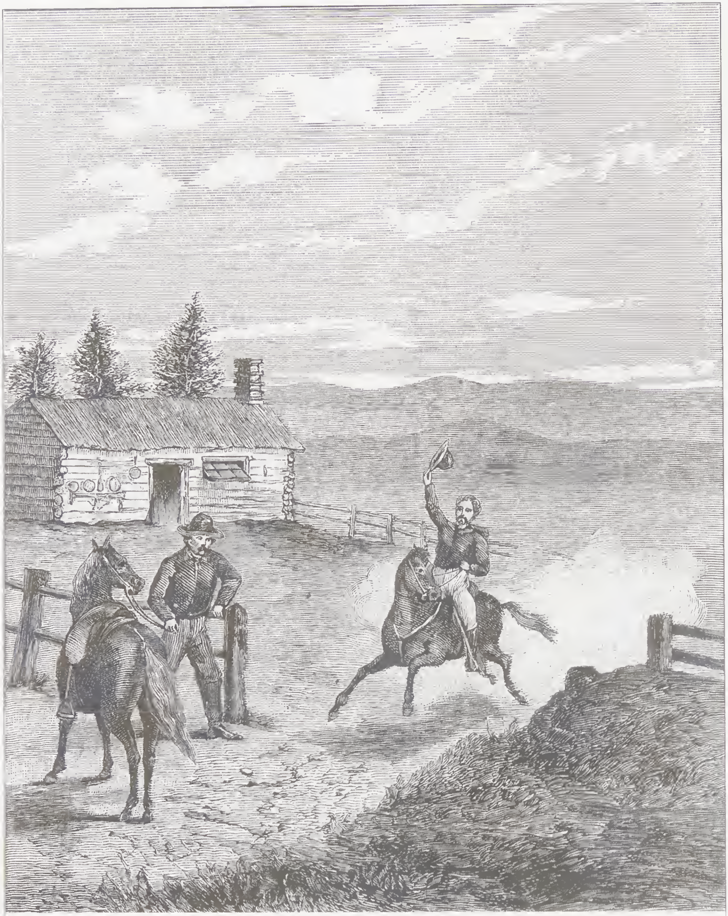
On October 9, 1858, the overland mail stagecoach from San Francisco reached St. Louis after a journey of 23 days and four hours.[4] A westbound stage that left St. Louis on the same day, headed west, reached San Francisco on October 10 after 24 days, 20 hours, and 35 minutes in transit. This was a far cry from the several months that the Forty Niners expended crossing the reaches of the far West just a

[1] Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. 432.

[2] Raymond A. Rydell, "The California Clippers," chapter in *Rushing for Gold*, 1949.

[3] Pages 391-392. The same 1855 source, pp. 453-454, told of travel in the other direction, noting that the trips of homeward bound clipper ships from San Francisco to the east were "generally accomplished in a shorter period, which arises chiefly from the prevalence of westerly winds in the region of Cape Horn, by reason of which homeward bound ships are speedily wafted round that dreaded place, where usually so much delay is caused to outward bound vessels." The *Northern Light* sailed from San Francisco, on March 15, 1853, and arrived in Boston on May 29, a "voyage in the wonderfully short space of 76 days. This is the fastest passage that has ever been made between the places by any ship that is not a steamer."

[4] In a related vein, *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 200, notes that shortly before the days of the Gold Rush, on April 1, 1848, the California Star Express stage left San Francisco overland toward Independence, Missouri, guaranteed passage to be accomplished in 60 days. Single letters were charged at a rate of 50 cents postage.



The Pony Express mail service, inaugurated on April 3, 1860, permitted news to be transmitted to and from San Francisco and the East Coast in about nine days, in an era in which telegraph lines had not been strung farther west than Missouri. In contrast, mail sent by steamer from New York to California took several weeks in transit as did letters via overland stagecoach. (*Marvels of the New West*)

decade earlier. Subsequently, a record of 23 days for news transmission was set from New York City to San Francisco by a combination of telegraph and stagecoach.

The Pony Express mail service started on April 3, 1860, connecting St. Joseph, Missouri, with San Francisco. On noon of the inaugural day, riders were dispatched from each end of the line. The average time expended by riders during the next year and a half of operation was about nine days per trip. This reduced the transmission of news from New York to San Francisco to the same short time, utilizing instantaneous telegraph to St. Joseph, then by horse and rider overland by Pony Express to San Francisco.

On April 14, 1860, the first Pony Express mail arrived in San Francisco, connecting by river steamer from Sacramento aboard the *S.S. Antelope*. The town went wild, and a celebration in the streets included fire equipment, Jessie Benton Frémont and other luminaries. A band played *Hail the Conquering Hero Comes*. Fourteen letters addressed to local addresses were delivered. [1]

The romance of the new service stirred the public's imagination, as per this stirring account written nearly a half century later:[2]

> In the spring of 1860...50 or 60 riders were engaged—men noted for their lithe, wiry physiques, bravery and coolness in moments of great personal danger, and endurance under the most trying circumstances of fatigue. Particularly were these requirements necessary to those who were to ride over the lonely route. It was no easy duty; horse and human flesh were strained to the limit of physical tension. Day or night, in sunshine or storm, under the darkest skies, in the pale moonlight, and with only the stars at times to guide him, the brave rider must speed on. Rain, hail, snow or sleet, there was no delay; his precious burden of letters demanded his best efforts under the most trying circumstances of the hazardous service; it brooked no delay on the route.
>
> Sometimes the pathway led across level prairies as straight as the flight of an arrow. It was oftener a zigzag trail hugging the brink of awful precipices and dark, narrow cañons infested with watchful savages, eager for the scalp of the daring rider who had the temerity to enter their mountain fastnesses.
>
> At the stations the rider must be ever ready for emergencies. Frequently double duty was assigned him.... The ponies employed in the service were splendid specimens of speed and endurance. They were fed and housed with the greatest care, for their mettle must never fail the test to which it was put. Ten miles distance at the limit of the animal's pace was exacted from him, and he came dashing into the station flecked with foam, nostrils dilated, and every hair reeking with perspiration, while his flanks thumped at every breath.
>
> Nearly 2,000 miles in eight days must be made; there was no allowance for loss of time. When the express rode up to the station both rider and pony were always ready. The only delay was a moment of rest as the saddle pouch with its precious burden was thrown on and the rider leaped into his place, then away they rushed down the trail, and in a moment were out of sight.
>
> Two hundred and fifty miles a day was the distance traveled.... The rider carried no surplus weight. Neither he nor his pony were handicapped with anything that was not absolutely necessary. Even his case of precious letters made a bundle no larger than an ordinary writing tablet, but there was $5 paid in advance for every letter transported across the continent....[3]

William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody was among the riders.[4] While many letters went by Pony Express, in 1860 most mail went either by overland coach or by sea. In this year more mail to the East was handled by Butterfield's Overland Stage than by the mail boats through Panama.[5]

The news of the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in 1861 reached San Francisco in eight days and 14 hours via Pony Express. During this time, newspapers on both coasts printed editions on special thin paper for transmission by horse and rider. To bring news to the East the San Francisco papers would be opened at St. Joseph, and articles would be keyed into the telegraph for further dissemination to cities and towns along the Atlantic Seaboard.

For its brief existence, expenses of organization and maintenance of the Pony Express are estimated at $700,000, and revenues of about $500,000, leaving a net loss of $200,000. Later romantic tales of hold-ups, cowboys and Indians, sheriffs' posses, etc., notwithstanding, during the entire length of the service, in which some 650,000 miles of terrain were traversed in about two years, only one mail was ever lost, and that was not an important one.

On October 24, 1861, the first telegram was sent coast to coast, bringing an instant end to the romantic Pony Express. However, in later times telegraph service often was interrupted by sabotage by hostile Indians, Confederate sympathizers, and just plain ornery folks. Thus, for several years after 1861, during such down times communications sometimes took a week or more to arrive from the East. Poignantly in relation to the present text and the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, the line was out of commission for much of August 1865.

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1 Beebe and Clegg, *U.S. West: The Saga of Wells Fargo*, p. 85.

2 Quotation from William Lightfoot Visscher, *The Pony Express*, 1908.

3 Two mail pouches made of leather were carried, accommodating a weight of about 20 pounds. The letters and dispatches were wrapped in oiled silk and sealed at the station of origin; each pouch was locked. Most letters were written on tissue paper, permitting hundreds to be carried on a single trip. The first trip from St. Joseph to San Francisco, some 1,966 miles, was made in 10 days, followed by 14 days for the next trip, and nine days for the third. Each rider was to cover 100 to 140 miles at a single stretch of duty, with fresh horses every 20 to 25 miles. Riders were paid $120 to $125 per month. Horses were mostly half-breed, semi-wild mustangs from California. Speed of travel ranged from slow through treacherous passes and poor trails to about 25 miles per hour in open stretches. Toward the end of the Pony Express service rate surcharge was reduced from $5 to just $1 per half ounce, with the letter to be enclosed in a government envelope bearing a 10¢ stamp.

4 Years later, Buffalo Bill, by then a veteran showman and popular entertainment figure, regaled listeners with a story of how he was almost killed when two rogues held him at gunpoint and demanded his mail pouches. In the best tradition of the West, he escaped, the mail went through, and the outlaws were later caught.

5 Beebe and Clegg, *U.S. West: The Saga of Wells Fargo*, p. 306.

San Francisco Comes of Age

By the late 1850s San Francisco had left most tumult behind, the Committee of Vigilance was no longer necessary, and the metropolis took on the trappings of a major cosmopolitan city, the West Coast equivalent, sort of, to New York City or Paris. In fact, the New York Restaurant was a popular eatery, and the City of Paris was the town's leading fashion emporium. Municipal transportation was facilitated by many horse-drawn coaches and cars. Railroads, so common in the East, had yet to make an impact on connecting cities along the West Coast.

Travel aboard steamers in and out of the Golden Gate was apt to be a pleasant experience, weather permitting. Gone were the days of overstuffed steerage quarters, harrowing experiences in the land crossing at Panama (the Panama Railroad had been carrying travelers since 1855, and its securities were popular investments on the New York Stock Exchange), and other inconveniences. Steamship owners added many touches of elegance to old and new ships to entice travelers, many of whom routinely went back East to visit relatives and conduct business.

In the American West, San Francisco became the focal point of wealth and the home of the moneyed class. The great "silver barons" who made their fortunes in Virginia City, Nevada, in the 1860s spent their money not in Nevada, but by building mansions in distant San Francisco. Similarly, successful railroaders and bankers tried to outdo each other in the conspicuous display of wealth and elegance.

In the East, any study of the social scene in New York City or Philadelphia would have to include the watering places where the wealthy escaped to in the summer, including Newport, Saratoga Springs, and other spas. Not so with a study of San Francisco, which was at once its own commercial center and society gathering spot. No need to take a steamer to somewhere a few hundred miles away on the coast. Of course, San Francisco, with a moderate year-round climate was more pleasant in July and August than were the sweltering cities along the Atlantic Coast.

The Diversity of the Local Population

A microcosm of family origins in San Francisco is provided by a survey of the birthplaces of school children enrolled in San Francisco as published in *Hutchings' California Magazine,* January 1858. The vast majority of youngsters were the children of gold-seekers who had arrived in the decade since 1848, some born to parents after they settled in California, but most having made the trip west. It is seen that more schoolchildren had been born in New York state than in California:

> New York: 1,468;[1] **California: 1,010;** Massachusetts: 726;[2] Louisiana: 334;[3] Pennsylvania: 230; Maine: 168; New Jersey: 102; Missouri: 84;[4] Maryland:. 72; Ohio: 70; Illinois: 57; New Hampshire: 55; Rhode Island: 48; Connecticut: 45; Kentucky: 39; Texas: 30; Mississippi: 29; Virginia: 29; Tennessee: 19; Wisconsin: 19; District of Columbia: 18; Alabama: 17; Vermont: 17; Georgia: 14; Arkansas: 11; Delaware: 10; Indiana: 10; Iowa: 10; South Carolina: 8; Florida: 6; Minnesota: 6; Oregon: 5;[5] North Carolina: 5; Utah: 1; Washington Territory: 1.

The preceding is a very useful window on the population composition that would later affect feelings of San Franciscans toward the Civil War and the divergent views that characterized North vs. South. It is quite apparent that the vast majority of families were from the northern states.

From foreign countries the figures of nativity were as follows:

> Australia: 191; England: 150; Germany: 149; Ireland: 72; Chile: 59;[6] France: 57; Canada: 53; Mexico: 47; Scotland: 35; China: 29;[7] New Zealand: 16; Prussia: 15; Austria: 14; Sandwich Islands (Hawaii): 13; Russia: 8; Italy: 7; Switzerland: 6; Panama: 5; Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania): 5; Belgium: 4; Peru: 3; Prince Edward Island: 2; West Indies: 2; picked up at or near Cape Horn: 7; South America (excluding preceding listings): 19; various including Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Brazil, Africa, Pacific Ocean, and Atlantic Ocean, each: 1.

Not included in the above were freed slaves or native Californians (if adults, natives were usually of Mexican or Indian extraction). Indeed, in 1858 the population was as cosmopolitan as could be!

The population of San Francisco was estimated as 2,000 in February 1849, rising to 5,000 by July, and to about 20,000 by the end of December.[8] The earlier (1850) population census figure for San Francisco included 34,776. By 1860 this number had increased by 63% to 56,802. San Francisco figures for the latter year include these divisions:

> White male: 33,900.
> White female: 21,626.
> Free colored, male: 786.
> Free colored, female: 390.
> Indians: Included in above; not tallied separately.
> Half-breeds: Included in above; not tallied separately.
> Chinese: Included in above; not tallied separately.

[1] This was the major port of disembarkation for ships heading from the East to the California gold fields. In addition to whatever attraction the gold discoveries had for New York City, there was a great amount of interest in the upstate districts.

[2] Separately, the report noted that while New York-state natives were the most numerous among eastern states, *in proportion to the total population* of the state, Massachusetts outranked all.

[3] New Orleans, Louisiana, was one of two major ports of disembarkation for steamers to Central America, connecting to California.

[4] Missouri was the primary jumping-off spot for overland travel to California.

[5] It was estimated that in 1848 over half of the working male population of Oregon went to the California gold fields. However, they left their families behind, and by the end of 1849 most had returned. Thus, Oregon natives were insignificant among San Francisco schoolchildren in 1858.

[6] Valparaiso, Chile, was a stop for steamers going around Cape Horn to San Francisco. Chile was often spelled as Chili in contemporary accounts.

[7] Seemingly, this figure is far too low. Perhaps Chinese children were educated in their homes or not formally schooled at all. In any event, San Francisco statistics of the 1850s and 1860s relative to the Chinese population are very inaccurate.

[8] Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. 54[illegible].

The foregoing 1860 federal census offered a view of society, commerce, and other aspects of the state. The figures are by necessity approximate, and, in fact, San Franciscans protested the results, and in the next year made their own estimates. However, in a relative sense the 1860 figures are informative.

Reflective of different ratios in the inland mining areas, Sierra County had just 1,537 white females in contrast to 9,793 white males. For unattached males in the gold fields, occasional visits to San Francisco still offered a paradise of sensual attractions and a taste of the good life.

Mark Twain in Town

Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain") spent much time in the West in the 1850s and 1860s, including in San Francisco, where he lived in 1864-5 and wrote articles for the *Golden Era*. He was also a contributor of a weekly article for $12 to the *Californian*, a journal founded by C.H. Webb.[1] At the time his acquaintance and fellow writer Bret Harte was editor of the *Californian* at $20 per week while he held down a better-paying job at the San Francisco Mint.

Twain, quite impecunious, had just finished a stint as a reporter and handyman for the *Territorial Enterprise* in Virginia City, Nevada, and had not yet achieved any degree of fame. In Nevada in 1863 he had met Artemus Ward, enjoyed his humorous lectures, and with encouragement from Ward, decided to write in a serio comic vein. In San Francisco, Twain worked as a modestly paid reporter while amassing a fund of anecdotes and experiences that would serve him well in years to come and, in time, make him a wealthy man.

Regarding the climate of the city of the Golden Gate, Mark Twain put it this way:

> [illegible]

The humorist went on to say that the weather was so boring that residents yearned for lightning to appear and strike somebody, or even for an earthquake to break the monotony!

And, indeed, earthquakes were a way of life and were regularly reported in the newspapers. The typical temblor rocked and shook buildings, causing some masonry to fall or cracks to appear in the ground. In October 1865, just missing the close of the *Brother Jonathan* era covered by the present study, a fairly intense quake caused extensive damage.

Writing articles did not permit Mark Twain to exist much above the poverty level in San Francisco, forcing him to engage what he called "slinking," or slipping around to avoid creditors—including a persistent one in 1864 who hounded him for $45 due on a debt he had incurred in Virginia City.[3] Further:

> During all this time I had but one piece of money—a silver ten cent piece—and I held to it and would not spend it on any account, lest the consciousness coming strong upon me that I was *entirely* penniless, might suggest suicide. I pawned everything but the clothes I had on; so I clung to my dime desperately, till it was smooth from handling.

Soon thereafter, Twain gained the acquaintance of a nearly penniless vagrant—Mr. Blucher he called him, although this was not his real name. Blucher, who had not had a meal for two days, found a dime on the street, and:

> To get the most for it was the idea. He knew that at the Miners' Restaurant he could get a plate of beans and a piece of bread for ten cents, or a fish-ball and some few trifles.... At French Pete's he could get a veal cutlet, plain, and some radishes and bread for ten cents; or a cup of coffee—a pint at least—and a slice of bread, but the slice was not thick enough by the eighth of an inch, and sometimes they were still more criminal than that in the cutting of it....

Before spending his dime, the hungry Blucher encountered still another vagrant, who begged him for money. He, too, had not had a square meal for a long time. He took the man to Martin's Restaurant, the finest eatery in town, where Blucher had been a much appreciated patron in happier financial times.[4] The maitre d' recognized and greeted Blucher effusively, unaware of his present insolvency. Then Blucher had a brilliant idea:

> He took the outcast's arm...and seated him at a marble table, placed the bill of fare before him, and said:
>
> "Order what you want, friend." Then, "Charge it to me, Mr. Martin."

1. Inaugural issue published on May 28, 1864.
2. *Roughing It*, 1872, pp. 410-411. The book is a collection of essays, satires, and comic vignettes based upon his experiences in Nevada, California, the Sandwich Islands, and other places.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 428 ff.
4. A restaurant named Martin's had been a favorite lunch spot for W.T. Sherman during his career as a banker in San Francisco in the mid-1850s. Cf. *Personal Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman*, 4th edition, 1891, p. 128.

The What Cheer House was the average traveler's home away from home. The hotel offered inexpensive, clean rooms. On the main floor were a museum and library in addition to other public areas. The establishment, owned by R.B. Woodward, was a well known stopping place for many years. (*Hutching's California Magazine*)

WHAT CHEER HOUSE,

SAN FRANCISCO,

Is the BEST, CHEAPEST and LARGEST HOTEL in California.

FIRST CLASS BOARD, $5 00 PER WEEK,

INCLUDING FREE BATHS.

The best of **Lodgings, 50 cts.** per night, and at cheaper rates by the Week.

SHOWER BATHS

FREE to all the guests of the HOUSE, and are kept well supplied with Towels.

NO LIQUORS kept on the premises. ☞ House open all night.

A LARGE FIRE-PROOF SAFE,

WITH COMBINATION LOCK, KEPT IN THE OFFICE.

The READING ROOM, LIBRARY and MUSEUM, are open during all hours of the Day and evening, to the FREE use of all the guests.

It is the House, above all others, where MERCHANTS, MINERS, MECHANICS, and all other classes can, at all times, secure superior accommodations at low prices.

Baths, hot and cold, can be enjoyed daily, by the public generally, at 25 cts. each.

R. B. WOODWARD, Proprietor.

> "All right, Mr. Blucher," said Martin.
>
> Then Blucher stepped back and leaned against the counter and watched the man stow away cargo after cargo of buckwheat cakes at seventy-five cents a plate; cup after cup of coffee, and porterhouse steaks worth two dollars apiece; and when six and a half's worth of destruction had been accomplished, and the stranger's hunger appeased, Blucher went down to French Pete's, bought a veal cutlet plain, a slice of bread, and three radishes with his dime and feasted like a king!

Nationwide recognition came to Twain in early 1867 when a collection of his works, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches,*[1] caused a sensation, followed in 1872 by *Roughing It,* the book which included the sketch about the vagrant, but subsequently happily satiated, Blucher. In these and other writings, Clemens drew upon his experiences in real life.[2]

The What Cheer House

By the mid-1860s, the What Cheer House on Sacramento Street was firmly established as a combination hotel, restaurant, and social meeting place for citizens and visitors who desired diverse amusement, representative of various caravansaries in the city which were a few notches in cost below the elegant hotels, but far finer than typical boarding houses.

In the 1850s, proprietor R.B. Woodward added a reading room.[3] A "well chosen library" was available for patrons of the hotel and, for a fee, to the general public, and was usually crowded. Offered were 2,000 to 3,000 volumes plus newspapers from various California towns and eastern cities and Europe. As the contents reveal what Californians were interested in reading at the time, this description is quoted from an 1859 account:

> There are about 400 volumes on farming, bee raising, gardening, [illegible] growing, stock raising, horticulture, etc., and some 150 works on biography, including those of the most remarkable men and women of present and past ages. The classics are not forgotten, as there are translations of the principal [illegible] of the ancients.
>
> There are nearly 400 volumes of the best fictitious works, including several from Dickens, Irving, Scott, Cooper, Miss Bremer, Marryat, Thackeray, Hawthorne, and others, and about 150 fine [illegible] works. There are many excellent selections from poetical and dramatic authors; a large collection of books on voyages and travels, besides a large and choice variety of practical, miscellaneous, religious, and other works.

In 1859, building upon the success of the library, a museum measuring 45 feet long by 14 feet wide was added to the What Cheer House. The exhibits included cases displaying some 600 specimens of birds, 25 stuffed animals (deer, armadillo, Norway rat, etc., even a dog) and many more preserved in alcohol, 1,200 birds' eggs, Indian relics, seashells, minerals, and:

> There is a large collection of old and rare coins, chiefly copper and brass, going back even to the times of the Romans; also medals, Indian wampum, beads, cowries, and other currency.

The appeal of the What Cheer House continued to grow. Langley's 1864-5 *San Francisco Directory* devoted this editorial space to the attraction:

> [In addition to public libraries] several of the hotels of the city are provided with large and well selected collections of books for the use of guests. That belonging to the What Cheer House numbers about 5,000 volumes of well selected works, connected with which is an extensive cabinet of specimens in natural history, and a large number of paintings, with a marble bust by Powers, copied by that artist from his statue of *California,* and a fancy head in marble by Gault, an eminent sculptor, which works of art, selected by the proprietor, Mr. Woodward, during his tour in Europe, reflect credit upon his taste and liberality.

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1 The title "sketch" was first published as "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," in the *Saturday Press*, New York, 1865. This was reprinted in many papers and was the springboard to his career.

2 The life of Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) has been widely chronicled; thus, space in the present text will not be given to it. He died on April 21, 1910, and was honored and eulogized to an extent never before given to an American man of letters.

3 Account from *Hutchings' California Magazine*, July 1859 (library) and June 1860 (museum). Later, Woodward would achieve even greater success and would open Woodward's Gardens, a combined outdoor and indoor (within glass panels in the manner of a greenhouse) recreation and entertainment area which became one of the best known attractions in the city. "What Cheer" was primarily a *Rhode Island* term and was used in that state for various places of public accommodation including a bank.

Chapter Three

Coins and Currency in America

Introduction

The history of money in California from the Gold Rush days, beginning in 1848, to the last year of the life of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* 1865, might as well be the monetary history of a *separate country.* What happened on the East Coast during the same time was in many instances entirely different from the transpirations in the West.

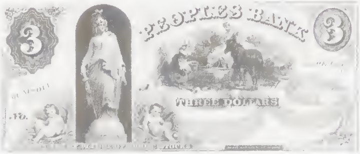
During the Civil War years, 1861-1865, monetary conditions in New York City were in chaos, while in San Francisco it was business as usual, no problem (except when the government tried to introduce "eastern" paper money). The stability of California can be laid to policies established by the California State Legislature in 1850, of which much more will be said.

In California, everyday transactions were based upon *gold coins.* Such coins were carried as treasure aboard ships out of San Francisco, in sharp contrast to cargoes elsewhere. There were no treasure-laden ships out of New York City at the time, save for a few vessels trans-shipping California gold to London.[1]

The stories of coins salvaged from lost sidewheel steamers such as the *S.S. Central America* and the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* have as their foundation the monetary policies of California in the 1850s and 1860s.

Gold vs. Bank Notes in the East

The 15-year era of the life of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was one of great financial and monetary transitions, upheavals, and problems in the eastern part of the United States. For much of this span there was little sense or order, and even by 1865 solutions had not been reached. By that latter time there were *no* silver or gold coins in circulation in Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, or Boston. In contrast, in San Francisco such coins were plentiful.



A genuine $3 bill issued by the People's Bank of St. Peter, Minnesota, in the mid-nineteenth century. Thousands of varieties of notes were privately issued by banks in the East and Midwest; so many that no one could keep track of all of them. At any given time a substantial percentage of notes in circulation were counterfeit or from insolvent banks. (Witham and Sansoucy Collections)

Paper money issued by private banks flooded commercial channels in the East and Midwest in 1848, there being no federal currency at the time.[3] Regulations were under various state laws, with the result that in Michigan just about

1 Regarding transshipment from New York City: "[illegible] said, preferred the octagonal [$50] ingots to regular American gold coins, and they were exported in huge quantities [illegible] from California [illegible] from New York City. An item appeared in one of the papers on January 2, 1853, to the effect that the steamer *Asia*, from New York to Liverpool, took $200,000 in $50 gold pieces." Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913, p. [illegible]

2 San Francisco, by far the largest city in California, [illegible]. However, monetary conditions were essentially the same in other California towns and cities.

3 Technically, there were some [illegible] "currency"; cf. *An Illustrated History of U.S. [illegible]* [illegible] no widely circulating notes.

anyone could float paper money, with little in the way of oversight or enforced regulations. In sharp contrast in New York state the issuers were subject to stringent rules. Even in New York, despite its laws, there were many losses sustained by the public. In the final determination, a paper note imprinted TEN DOLLARS was worthless if its issuing bank failed. On the other hand, a gold coin imprinted TEN D. (this being the inscription on the reverse side of $10 gold eagles at the time) was worth nearly that sum in meltdown or intrinsic value. Paper money was temporary. Gold was eternal.

There were many stories of enterprising individuals engaging in banknote fraud in states distant from commercial centers. A typical scenario would involve setting up a company, for example the Jones Bank, and writing to one of the banknote engraving firms in New York or Philadelphia to order a supply of paper money, particularly of popular denominations such as $1, $2, $3,[1] $5, and $10. The banknote companies had no central source to check for information about bank start-ups, and they nonchalantly filled orders for whatever notes were requested, so long as good payment was made. Often, the finished notes as well as the steel or copper plates from which they were printed were shipped to the Jones Bank, which could thereafter print its own money! In an actual situation, in the Midwest a bank with a seemingly important name, Michigan Bank of Detroit, was completely phony and was set up to pass notes marked "Bank of Michigan."[2]

Gold coins were rare in general circulation in the East and Midwest. Hugh McCulloch, of the Bank of Indiana, wrote that when he was a banker in that state from 1835 to 1849 he encountered not a *single* American gold coin in the course of his business over many years, although German 10-thaler gold coins brought to Indiana by immigrants from that country were sometimes seen.[3]

McCulloch also told of a man who came to Indiana with $[illegible] capital, accompanied by two associates who had no capital at all, and set about entering the banking business. They obtained via an I.O.U. some $50,000 in bonds from a southern state and deposited these with the treasurer of the state of Indiana. Further:

> This transaction having been completed, State bonds were bought and paid for in the same manner, and the operation was continued until the financial crisis of 1857 occurred, at which time this bank, which had been started with a capital of $[illegible], had a circulation [of its paper bank notes] of $[illegible].[4]

In order to give some sense of order to the flood of paper money, various weekly and monthly publications known as *bank note reporters* were published and sold on subscription. Under headings of states and towns, various banks would be listed, together with a rating or commentary. Notes of highly rated banks close to commercial centers would be valued at par or face value. Certain notes of

Proof impression of a $100 note of the Atlantic Bank, Portland, Maine. Notes of this and other private banks circulated widely from the 1830s through the early 1860s, but often had little in the way of security or backing. (Stetson University Collection).

other banks would be described as "worthless," "failed," or assigned a market value indicating they were worth some percentage of face value, such as 75%. The bank note reporters would often incorporate a feature known as a *counterfeit detector,* which would list the known spurious notes from different banks and give descriptions of their denominations and designs. There were many curious sidelights, including the publication of a journal that no doubt *helped* counterfeiters: known as the *Autographical Counterfeit Detector,* it was published by John Thompson in 1849 and

[1] $3 notes were among the most popular denominations of the time. Later, in the 1860s, when the federal government issued Legal Tender notes, the denomination of $3 was intended to be made, but was not. In time, the public came to believe that something spurious might be "as phony as a three-dollar bill," not realizing that at one time legitimate $3 notes of private bank issue were abundant in circulation.

[2] James Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782-1866*, Vol. II, pp. 1035 ff. (Michigan notes).

[3] Bray Hammond, *Banking and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, p. 616, quoting Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century*, New York, 1889, pp. 119, 125.

[4] The present author has not been able to find any Indiana bank with this capital-to-notes ratio, or even close to it, in the federal report, *Condition of Banks in 1857*, which includes figures for specific banks. However, it makes a good story. • Concerning the Panic of 1857: On August 24, 1857, the New York City division of the Ohio Life Insurance & Trust Company failed, followed by its parent company shortly afterward. This triggered a domino effect in the financial markets, with shares of many companies falling precipitously. Silver and gold coins started to become scarce in circulation when holders of paper money sought them in exchange. Banks began to weaken noticeably on September 4, when a broker protested a nonpayment in coins of just $250 in notes that had been presented. Toward the end of September, three leading banks failed in Philadelphia, and the other leading banks there suspended specie payments. By October 1, more than 30 banks had failed in New York state. On October 13, 1857, all banks in New York City, with the single exception of the Chemical Bank, stopped paying out silver and gold coins. Most banks remained solvent, but not liquid. Paper currency issued by insolvent private banks became worthless or for a time sold for pennies on the dollar, later to become valueless as well. Meanwhile, notes of solvent banks sold at various small discounts in terms of cash, although some clothing merchants and others took the opportunity to advertise that they would accept currency at par in exchange for merchandise, absorbing the difference as a sales promotion. On November 7 the first steps were taken for solvent banks to resume paying out coins, and this was mostly accomplished on December 11. As might be expected, in California, there was no attention paid to the "panic," as not a single piece of paper money was in circulation.

faithfully reproduced the genuine signatures found on bank notes!

The publishers of such guides could be and were often "bought." This gave rise to two popular terms: To "puff" a bank a banknote reporter would say glowing things about a financial institution. The opposite was to "blow" a bank, and to say it was weak, or had failed and its notes were worthless. In either instance the truth might be quite different.

To give a real-life example, court testimony in an 1858 lawsuit revealed that the proprietors of the Litchfield Bank in Connecticut had paid nearly $1,000 in various bribes to Messrs. Monroe, Dye, and Taylor—these being three of the better-known New York City publishers of bank note detectors. This was done so that their periodicals would not "blow the bank."[1]

Someone who came to New York City with a $10 note drawn on a bank in Detroit, Michigan, could not spend it at face value. The holder could go to a currency exchange and sell it for a discount in terms of coins or "better" paper money, such as notes on a New York City bank that could be spent locally. Large establishments including hotels, dry-goods emporiums, and other retailers would likely take a Detroit note, but would consult a bank note reporter as to its value, and then to be on the safe side, discount it even further than the listing indicated. Once taken in payment, any note considered to be doubtful would be the first to be given out in change during a subsequent transaction.

Curiously, certain currency exchanges were glad to sell *worthless* notes in quantity for 2% to 3% of face value, and advertised such in the New York City newspapers! Thus, a crook or adventurer could spend $200 to $300 to buy $10,000 face value in authentic-appearing but really worthless paper money, and depart to rural areas and attempt to spend the notes at the denominations printed on them.

In the eastern and midwestern states these notes, good and bad, remained in circulation through the mid-1860s, after which they were replaced by federal issues.

Federal Mints

By 1848, the first year of the Gold Rush in distant California, there were several mints in operation in the eastern and midwestern United States:

1793 "Chain" motif copper cent, one of several designs produced in the first year of full operation of the newly established Philadelphia Mint. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr., Collection)

Gold dollars struck at the various branch mints each display a distinctive mintmark on the reverse below the wreath ribbon (top to bottom): 1852-C struck at the Charlotte Mint; 1853-D struck at the Dahlonega Mint; 1855-O struck at the New Orleans Mint. (Morgan, *et al.* Collections)

The Philadelphia Mint, built in 1792, first produced copper coins for circulation in 1793, followed by silver in 1794 and gold in 1795. Within the Mint building were many facilities, including for the design and production of dies, assaying and refining of precious metals, the striking of coins for circulation, the striking of medals, and the making of Proof coins for numismatists.[2] The Mint Cabinet, a collection of coins, mineral specimens, and other items, instituted in June 1838, was maintained there. The director of the Mint was situated there, and reported to the secretary of the Treasury in Washington. However, most of the day to day decisions were made in Philadelphia.

In 1835 Congress provided for the establishment of three branch mints, in New Orleans, Charlotte (North Carolina), and Dahlonega (Georgia). Coins from these facilities, first made in 1838, bore distinctive mintmarks, an O, C, or D. Each of these mints operated through early 1861, then closed, the Charlotte and Dahlonega mints forever, the New Orleans Mint until 1879. Struck at Charlotte and Dahlonega were gold coins of denominations from $1 to $5, while the New Orleans Mint made silver coins from the 3¢ piece to the silver dollar and gold coins from the $1 to the $20.

In terms of quantities produced, Philadelphia struck the most coins and New Orleans the second largest quantity, while Charlotte and Dahlonega ranked a distant third and fourth

Coins in Circulation (1848)

A banker in an eastern town or city in 1848 would be

[1] *Litchfield Enquirer*, November 25, 1858.

[2] Proof coins were made for cabinet or collecting purposes and were struck from highly polished dies, using specially prepared planchets, and struck at slow speed on a screw press (the screw press continued to be employed until 1894). On the other hand, "regular" coins made for circulation were from unpolished dies and were struck using regular planchets on high-speed production presses powered by steam (beginning in 1836). Such coins made for circulation are usually referred to as *business strikes* today. As Proof coins were deliberately made for numismatists and were carefully preserved, whereas little attention was paid by numismatists to business strikes, today there are many dates of coins for which high-grade Proofs are common, but high-grade business strikes are rare. Nearly all Proofs struck in the nineteenth century were made at the Philadelphia Mint. Occasionally a few pieces were made at the New Orleans, San Francisco, or Carson City branch mints for special presentation purposes.

familiar with coins of many denominations. Most often seen would be the "large" copper cent, first minted in 1793 and struck continuously since that time, excepting the solitary year 1815.[1] Half cents, struck intermittently since 1793, were rarely encountered, although some banks had some tucked away in the deep recesses of their vaults. Copper coins were used mainly in the Northeast and were seldom seen in the South or in the more distant reaches of the Midwest.

Silver coins were dominated by the half dollar, which had been made in large quantities for most years since their introduction in 1794. Depicted on the obverse of these and other currently minted silver pieces was Miss Liberty, seated, holding a liberty cap and pole. Half dimes, dimes, quarter dollars, and dollars of silver were also plentiful, although the last named denomination was apt to be seen only as part of larger transactions. Joining the current Liberty Seated coins were many older pieces dating back to the 1790s.

Gold coins included the denominations of $2.50, $5, and $10, with the highest value being known as the *eagle*, and the lesser pieces as the *quarter eagle* and *half eagle* respectively. Such coins were rarely seen in everyday commerce and, as earlier related, an Indiana banker pursued his career for many *years* without seeing a single American gold piece! Although gold coins had been minted since 1795, in the early nineteenth century there were significant fluctuations in the value of gold, and from time to time the bullion or melt down value of such pieces exceeded their face value. Because of this, the production of $10 coins was halted in 1804, leaving the $2.50 and $5 denominations as the only denominations made. In the general period between 1805 and 1834, the vast majority of United States gold coins were melted down. The wholesale destruction was almost unbelievable in some instances. As an example, Mint records show that 17,796 pieces were struck of the $5 gold half eagle in 1822, but only *three* such coins are known to collectors today! Of 57,442 $5 coins reported coined in 1829, over 99.97% have disappeared![2]

It was realized by the Treasury Department that the continuation of minting gold coins was but an exercise in futility. No sooner were coins struck than they were exported or melted. Few remained for use in domestic commerce.

1848 half dollar of the Liberty Seated design. This same motif was used on other silver denominations from the half dime to the dollar. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

1838-D (Dahlonega Mint) gold $5 of the *Classic Head* design. This motif was created in 1834 and used through 1838-9 on the $2.50 and $5 gold denominations. (Columbia Collection)

To remedy the untenable situation, on June 28, 1834, Congress lowered the authorized weight of gold coins, and after August 2, the date of implementation, newly minted gold coins circulated effectively for the first time in decades. Meanwhile, earlier, heavier gold coins had all but disappeared. Those few that remained were bought and sold at premium prices, with quotations being given in *Niles' Register* and other financial journals under the designation of "old tenor" coins.[3]

Thus, in 1848 nearly all gold coins encountered in banking or commercial channels were likely the lighter pieces made from summer 1834 onward. Designs included the *Classic Head*, minted from August 1834 to 1838-1839, and the *Liberty Head* or *Coronet* design, by Christian Gobrecht, minted from 1838 onward. Even though melting them was no longer profitable for speculators, gold coins were still infrequently encountered in everyday business transactions–especially in areas other than large cities–as the smallest denomination, $2.50, was apt to represent several days' wages for a typical workman. However, they were useful in large transactions and in the export trade.

Foreign Gold Coins

It is a curious fact that in America in the 1840s the most plentiful silver and gold coins in everyday circulation were pieces struck by *foreign* mints. Legal for trade were the coins of many countries, including a vast proliferation of silver pieces made in Mexico, Central America, and South

[1] Some cents were actually struck in 1815, but from dies predated 1816; thus, for numismatic purposes they are considered to be 1816 cents (cf. R.W. Julian, letter to author, December 10, 1998). In a related context, no cents were actually struck during calendar year 1823, but in 1824 some 1823-dated coins were made (*Ibid.*).

[2] In addition to the factor of wholesale melting and export, it is likely that many $5 pieces struck during calendar year 1822 and reported as such were, in fact, made from earlier dated dies.

[3] Under the Coinage Act of January 1837, gold coins were made slightly heavier. The balance between gold and silver coins remained in good order, in effect a bimetallic system as had been envisioned with the original Coinage Act of 1792, until upset with the influx of California gold in the late 1840s.

Gold 8 escudos "doubloon" struck in Mexico City, 1796. Coins of this denomination and of varying designs, struck at mints from Mexico to South America, were used extensively in California for many years including during the early days of the Gold Rush. Their nominal exchange value in commerce in San Francisco was about $16. (Guia Collection)

America. These coins, generally known as "Spanish dollars," were struck in over a dozen mints mostly under the control of Spain. The dollar was equal to eight reales, each real, also called a "bit," being worth 12½ cents. Thus, a two-bit piece was worth 25¢, giving rise to the *two bits* term we still hear sometimes today. Spanish-American gold coins were denominated in escudos, each escudo being worth about $2. The eight-escudo or $16 coin was called the *doubloon*, a piece which became an essential part of pirate folklore.

Coins of Holland, England, France, and other countries were also seen in American commerce. Generally, such pieces were valued by *approximate weight and appearance*. Any coin about the size of a United States quarter dollar, such as a Mexican two-reales piece or even a somewhat lightweight British shilling, was apt to trade for 25¢.

It was not unusual for advertisements to list and invoices to be reckoned in Spanish-American dollars or British pounds and shillings during the 1840s, even though the Philadelphia Mint had been turning out cents, dimes, dollars, and other coins since the 1790s. Such foreign coins would remain an essential part of trade in the United States until they were demonetized by the Act of February 21, 1857, which became effective two years later (plus a six-month extension).

The Silver Coin Shortage of the 1850s

Following the discovery of gold in California and the consequences of January 24, 1848, the yellow metal became plentiful on world markets. By 1850 it was considered "common" in relation to silver. For many years there had been a semi-official ratio of 16 to 1 of silver and gold; that is, 16 ounces of silver were supposed to be equivalent in value to about one ounce of gold. By early 1851, the value of gold had slipped in proportion, to the point at which only 15.45 ounces of silver were needed in exchange for one ounce of gold. While the logic of the ratio could be and was discussed, in practice it was widely followed by bullion dealers, foreign banks, and others on the monetary trade.

Beginning in 1850, silver coins were considered to be of special added value. As the ratio between silver and gold fell, it became profitable to take silver half dimes, dimes, quarter dollars, half dollars, and dollars from circulation and melt them down, for in terms of gold, more than face value worth of silver could be obtained. Aspects of the ratio were discussed by Director James Ross Snowden in the *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*, 1853:

> The disturbance of the relative values of gold and silver, and the consequent effects upon national and international currencies upon coinage, and upon pecuniary contracts, is a very large inquiry frequently under discussion in commercial circles, in the public prints, and in halls of legislation....
>
> According to well considered estimates, the production of the gold and silver mines of the world at the commencement of the present century—not taking into account those countries of Asia which were nearly shut out from the intercourse of nations—was in the proportion of *one* ounce of gold to *46* ounces of silver. Immediately before the opening of California, it probably changed to *one* ounce of gold against *17* ounces of silver.
>
> An average of the productions of the years 1852 and 1853, upon the same broad scale, appears to give a result of *one* ounce of gold to less than *four* ounces of silver. And yet, from the first of these periods to the last, there has been no great divergence in the bullion markets from the relative proportion of one ounce of gold to 16 ounces of silver. [Snowden continued with a rambling dissertation noting that the market for gold vs. silver had not been significantly disturbed, *but* added that the weight of United States silver coins had *lately been changed to suit the market*, etc.]

Snowden in this, the first report he issued under his directorship, went on to suggest that if all private bank notes below the denomination of $20 were abolished, this would provide a wider market and use for gold coins, now in abundant supply (at least in large cities and commercial centers in the East; San Francisco still had a shortage).

In a reversal of the gold-melting era of the early 1830s, in the early 1850s it was soon realized that the continuing production of silver coins was a futile effort. As soon as freshly minted coins were placed in commerce, they were plucked out by sharp-eyed merchants, bank tellers, and others. By January 1853, scarcely an American silver piece was in sight. Commerce was conducted nearly entirely by foreign silver, most examples of which were well worn and light weight. From 1850 through early 1853, many of the earlier and current silver coins produced by the Philadelphia Mint, dating back to 1794, and the New Orleans Mint, dating back to 1838, were melted.

Meanwhile, to provide at least a few federal silver coins for circulation, the silver three-cent piece or *trime* was inaugurated in 1851. Made of only 75% silver, instead of the customary 90%, such pieces were not profitable to melt. Tens of millions were produced during the next several years.

1851 silver three-cent piece or *trime*. This new denomination was made of 75% silver and 25% copper (different from the usual federal standard of 90% silver and 10% copper) and was intended to provide silver coins for circulation in an era in which pieces were being hoarded. Large quantities of trimes were made through 1853, after which the authorized weights of other silver coins were lowered, and the three-cent piece became unnecessary. However, coinage continued in reduced amounts through 1873. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

On February 21, 1853, Congress passed legislation lowering the weight of the silver half dime, dime, quarter dollar, and half dollar. After that time, these denominations once again circulated freely, and continued to do so for the balance of the decade.

The silver dollar was a different story. The weight was not changed, and later pieces were worth more than face value at the time they were minted. Such coins were produced only upon request from depositors of silver bullion, who primarily used the dollars in the export trade (where in any event they were valued by overseas customers by weight, not by face value). Silver dollars were in essence "trade dollars" or bullion coins after 1853, a condition that endured until the mid-1870s, by which time the price of silver dropped sharply.

New Gold Denominations

Meanwhile faced with a large amount of California gold awaiting coinage from shipments made from San Francisco to Philadelphia, the Treasury Department began production of two new denominations. The gold $1 was first made for circulation in 1849, and the $20 double eagle was first made in quantity in 1850. The latter immediately became the coin of choice for international transactions, earning for itself an enduring niche in the annals of American finance and, along the way, in the sagas of two treasure ships, the *S.S. Central America* and the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

In 1850 the $20 gold double eagle was introduced. Immediately it became the denomination of choice for use in large transactions and export shipments. (Norweb Collection)

In 1849 the gold dollar denomination made its debut. The Liberty Head design by James B. Longacre is similar to that used on the double eagle. (Columbia Collection)

From inception of the $20 in 1850, until gold coins were last struck for American circulation in 1933, more metal was used to make double eagles than for any other denomination. From when the San Francisco Mint began operations in 1854, continuing from that time through 1865 (the last year in the life of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*), more value in double eagles was produced than for all other silver and gold denominations *combined.* The gold $20 could be made efficiently, and recipients could quickly count them, a desirable situation for all concerned.

In history, in the annals of finance, and in romance, the American gold double eagle, containing about one ounce of the metal, became the successor to the famous Spanish gold eight-escudo "doubloon" of pirate lore.

Meanwhile, in the East in the 1850s the Treasury Department realized that the heavy copper cent was becoming increasingly cumbersome to the public, and with the rise in the price of copper metal, was becoming more expensive to produce. Experiments with smaller, lighter coins were conducted, culminating in the Act of February 21, 1857, which abolished the copper half cent and cent and also made provision for the elimination of foreign coins in circulation. On May 25, 1857, the first of the new small cents, made of copper-nickel alloy and of the Flying Eagle design, were released into circulation. Coins of this motif were produced through 1858, and in 1859 were replaced by pieces bearing James B. Longacre's Indian Head motif. Such cents, as ubiquitous as they may have been in eastern commerce, were irrelevant to California, as the denomination was virtually unknown there.

North vs. South

In the mid-nineteenth century the political situation in the East and Midwest had a deep and long-lasting effect on the money of those regions, events that echoed all the way to California. In times of trouble, "hard money" was often a haven of safety, whereas paper money could and did become worthless. Thus, as events of the 1850s and early 1860s transpired, the monetary differences between San Francisco and New York City evolved to the point at which there was virtually no similarity between the two.

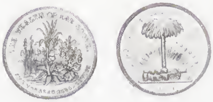
Much of the drama in everyday American life in the late 1850s centered about the question of northern interests versus those of the South, abolition versus slavery. As states were added to the Union, as debates were conducted in

Congress, as planning for the federal government went onward, the pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces determined the order of the day, and many decisions were centered on this burning question. In California, distant from the main areas of debate, citizens kept posted on the situation via newspapers and magazines and often expressed their opinions one way or the other. However, slaves were not held in California. Many free blacks participated in the Gold Rush.

As the years hastened on, the Dred Scott decision in the Supreme Court, determined in autumn 1857 but withheld from publication until after the congressional elections of that year, caused a wider division than ever between the North and the South. It was widely viewed that the decision, which stated that runaway slaves had to be returned to their masters and could not find freedom by escaping, was an effort to keep the Union patched together.[1] Black people continued to have very few rights and were sub-citizens in the eyes of the federal government. Often, black people were non-entities in surveys, lists of ship crew members, etc. While white citizens would be mentioned by name, blacks might be grouped in a crew list as "five colored men." The "colored" designation was also widely used in city directories in most regions of America, North as well as South.

In 1859, John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry made abolitionist Brown either a scoundrel (per the popular southern view) or a hero (in the North). It was anticipated that blacks would rise up on the southern plantations and join Brown and others to guarantee their freedom. However, this did not happen, Brown was captured and later executed, and slavery remained in effect. During the decade Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* soared to unprecedented popularity through multiple printings and helped convince many Americans that slavery, indeed, was an evil. In the South, prices for healthy male slaves continued to increase, and a good farm hand was worth as much as $2,000 at auction, including sales held within walking distance of the United States Capitol building in Washington. As the political gap between North and South widened, in Richmond, Virginia a $25,000 bounty was advertised for the heads of selected northerners who were deemed offensive to the southern cause. A local newspaper recommended that citizens who entertained visitors from the North should be watched closely.

Meanwhile, certain states in the South were forming their own political alliances, and talk spread of the South becoming an independent country. A popular token issued by John Stanton in Cincinnati in 1860 (from dies by Benjamin C. True), and distributed in the South, proclaimed that the "Wealth of the South" consisted of cotton, rice, corn, and tobacco.[2] Increasingly, southerners felt that these products were the vital part of America, much more important than manufactured goods and banking (which were important elements of northern commerce). Soon, this would have an impact on remote California.



WEALTH OF THE SOUTH token from dies cut in Cincinnati in 1860 by Benjamin C. True and marketed by John Stanton of the same city.

The Election of 1860

In the summer of 1860 the various political parties held caucuses and conventions to select candidates. Ideally, it was hoped that a balance could be struck to provide a president and vice president with one having popularity to southern voters and the other to northerners, although divisions of public appeal were not that simple. The voting preferences of Californians were not important to such considerations, as for most easterners in the heat of political debate, distant California might as well have been a foreign country.

The Constitutional Union Party held its nominating convention in Baltimore on May 9, 1860. That city, located between the North and the South, was considered to be neutral territory. The gathering was dominated by conservative Whigs from the South who adopted a platform of preserving the Union and supporting the Constitution, with much support being given by former members of the now-defunct Know Nothing Party. Sam Houston, well-known patriot of Texas, and John Bell of Tennessee were proposed for the presidential spot, and on the second ballot Bell received the nomination. Earlier, Bell had served as speaker of the House of Representatives and had been in the cabinets of presidents Harrison and Tyler. His running mate was Edward Everett, America's best known orator, who had recently given well over 100 speeches on the desirability of restoring and preserving the somewhat deteriorated but historically important Mount Vernon and who, it seemed, could declaim at great length on about any other subject under the sun.[3] In ensuing months the Bell-Everett ticket failed to gain much attention or public support.

[1] However, by 1857 the sentiment was [illegible]. The adaptation of an 1830 comment by Andrew Jackson, "The Union must and shall be preserved," gained wide currency and [illegible] Hard Times tokens of the 1837 era and Civil War tokens [illegible].

[2] The sentiment "the wealth of the South" [illegible] 1850s as the North and South became polarized. In December 1858 a New Orleans journal, *DeBow's Review*, commented: "The wealth of the South is permanent and real, and that of the North [illegible]."

[3] Later, on November 19, 1863, at Gettysburg, Everett gave a two-hour speech at the dedication of the battlefield as a national cemetery, preceding on the podium President Lincoln, who offered [illegible] (the "Gettysburg Address") which [illegible].

Campaign ferrotype bearing the portraits of the two Republican Party candidates in the 1860 election, Lincoln for president and Hamlin as his running mate. The pictures were fitted into a brass frame and holed at the top to permit suspension.

The Republican Party met in convention in Chicago on May 16, 1860. At the time the leading contenders for president in this party were Senator William H. Seward, of New York, a long-time figure on the political scene, and Abraham Lincoln, a lawyer and up-and-coming politician from Illinois. On the second ballot, Lincoln was given the nod. Selected as his running mate was Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. The Republican ticket thus constituted was clearly pro-North in its views and very much against slavery.

The Democratic Party experienced many problems at its first gathering in 1860, including the seating of delegates and the adoption of a platform. After a false start and much dissension, its convention reconvened in Baltimore on June 18, 1860, and unanimously named northerner Stephen A. Douglas as its presidential candidate. Selected for vice president was Sen. Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama, the latter being an obvious balance to the ticket. However, Fitzpatrick declined, after which Herschel V Johnson, earlier a governor of Georgia, accepted the party's call, again adding equipoise.

Still, there was much unhappiness in the Democratic ranks. Certain delegates from the South who had been denied admittance to the reconvened nominating convention held in Baltimore on June 18, 1860, later met separately to name their own candidate, John C. Breckinridge, for president, with Sen. Joseph Lane of Oregon (whose *name* figures later in the *Brother Jonathan* saga), as his running mate.

Thus, in the election in November 1860, voters had four candidates for president: Bell, Lincoln, Douglas, and Breckinridge. When the ballots were counted Lincoln came in first with 40% of the popular vote and an overwhelming 180 Electoral College votes. Breckinridge had the second highest total of Electoral College votes (72), but it was Douglas who was second highest in the popular vote (with 29%, although this translated into only 12 Electoral College votes).

After the Election

Abraham Lincoln was anathema to the South, and after the contest was settled, the two parts of the country became more opposed and divided than ever before.

On December 20, South Carolina seceded from the Union. In early 1861 Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas and North Carolina followed suit. Delegates from six of these states met in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 4th to form the government of the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis was named president on a provisional basis; in October a general election confirmed the choice.

Southern militia were armed and a commission named to explore future relations with that *other* country, the United States of America. At the time the federal government was at an impasse. Outgoing president James Buchanan (who turned over the office to Abraham Lincoln on Inauguration Day, March 4, 1861) did virtually nothing in response to the crisis. Secretary of State William H. Seward stated that in recent events he saw not the establishment of an independent Confederate government leading a willing people, but, instead, a temporary, unjustified, and unconstitutional challenge to the federal government. There was a question as to the sanctity of federal military posts, customs houses, and other government buildings in the South, and early in his term, President Abraham Lincoln tried to resolve the problem by negotiations.

From the time of the December secession of South Carolina onward there was much concern as to the fate of Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, protected by Major Robert Anderson and several dozen federal troops, hardly a match for the hundreds if not thousands of heavily armed Confederate troops amassed on the nearby shore. The seeds of conflict had been sown, and the harvest was in the offing.

On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces shelled the island bastion, soon laying waste to its stone walls and interior buildings and forcing its evacuation. It was a grand spectacle and entertainment for the citizens of Charleston, who watched the destruction from the shore and from rooftops. Surely, the true glory of the South would soon be realized. Thus the War of the Rebellion, as it was called at first, was ignited.

On March 4, 1861, the United States Army was comprised of 13,024 officers and men. On April 15, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to enlist, followed by a proclamation for 80,000 more on May 4. Sign-up was for a three-year stint.

Uncertainty Promotes Hoarding

The Civil War was underway. Both opponents called up troops, and the Confederacy and the Union each plotted strategies for success. Optimism ran high on both sides.

Breckinridge, at age 35, was elected vice president in 1856, with James Buchanan as president. After his unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1860, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Branded a southern sympathizer although he had committed no treasonous acts, he was served a warrant for arrest. He fled to the South, where he became important in the Confederacy. He was made a brigadier general and later a major general in the Confederate Army. He was involved in many battles including those at Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge. He scored a notable victory at New Market. Later he became Confederate secretary of war under President Jefferson Davis. After the war he left the country, but returned in 1869 under the provisions of amnesty. He practiced law until his death in 1875.

THE REASON WHY.

CUSTOMER. "Your PAPA says he hain't no Pennies to make change with. You seem to have lots of 'em."

GROCER'S SON. "Guess I have; and POP's got *six barrels* full down cellar. He's waitin' for 'em to rise."——(*You should have seen the* EXPRESSION *of* POP'S FACE.)

In the summer of 1862 in the East the public hoarded all United States coins. Not even the smallest denomination, the Indian Head one-cent piece or "penny," was to be seen in general circulation, as reflected in this cartoon. (*Harper's Weekly*)

This was to be a grand war! By July there were 30,000 new soldiers in the Washington area under the command of General Winfield Scott, who had achieved fame in the War with Mexico (and who had been the subject of a beautiful medal authorized by Congress and engraved by Charles Cushing Wright). The first Battle of Bull Run ended in defeat for the Union. Not an auspicious sign. After other losses, Lincoln appointed General George B. McClellan as commander of all Union forces, which proved to be an error.

What was anticipated as an easy victory by northerners was by December 1861 a confused situation. It was obvious that the South had not fallen quickly, and there was concern in the halls of Congress as to whether it would fall at all. Tens of thousands of Yankee soldiers were wounded or killed, and war became hell. Uncertainty prevailed.

As a natural consequence, the public began hoarding "hard money." In the last week of December 1861, banks in leading cities stopped paying out gold coins. This encouraged even more hoarding, and during early 1862 most such coins disappeared from commercial channels. In early summer 1862 payments in silver coins were halted as well.

During 1862 notable victories in the continuing Civil War were scored by both the Union and the Confederacy, with the Union's first significant success being the capture by General U.S. Grant's forces of Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. On March 8th, two ironclad ships, the Confederate *Merrimack* and the Union *Monitor*, engaged each other off the coast of Virginia. Neither scored a victory, but the days of wooden ships were numbered. As will be related, San Francisco soon had its own version of the *Monitor*.

In November, Lincoln relieved McClellan of his command and appointed General Ambrose Everett Burnside in charge of the Army of the Potomac. In time McClellan would become a favorite of anti-Lincoln citizens in the North and would personify the opposition to the chief executive.[1]

Meanwhile, the monetary situation worsened. Then came the surprise: in the second week of July 1862 even the "lowly" copper-nickel Flying Eagle and Indian cents were scarcely to be seen. Everyday trade from mid-July onward was conducted by a variety of substitutes, including printed paper scrip notes, most valued from 1¢ up to 50¢, with the most popular denominations being 5¢ and 10¢. For the next year, such notes proliferated and were issued by businesses, banks, and even town governments. In Roxbury, Massachusetts, druggist and rare coin dealer W. Elliot Woodward issued his own 5¢ and 20¢ scrip dated January 1, 1863, and printed in Boston by Louis Prang (who became one of America's best known lithographers).

United States postage stamps were made legal tender in small amounts on July 17, 1862, and many were used as currency either by pasting them on small pieces of paper or, more often, enclosing them in an envelope with an advertisement printed on the outside. Later, John Gault patented a small round brass frame fronted with clear mica, enclosing a postage stamp of a denomination from 1¢ to 90¢.

Beginning in a large way in 1862 and increasing to a veritable flood in early 1863 were copper tokens the size of a cent, bearing various emblems, inscriptions, and advertisements. Over a dozen diesinkers–primarily located in Chicago, Cincinnati, and New York City–produced thousands of different varieties.

Federal one-cent pieces did not reappear in circulation until 1864, and silver and gold coins were not generally seen in quantity until many years later, beginning in a large way in April 1876.[2] Throughout the long period from 1862 through 1876, the East and Midwest were awash in paper money, but coinless except for small copper (bronze) and nickel alloy denominations. In contrast, during the same period San Francisco was swimming in bright, shiny gold coins with not a scrap of paper money in sight.

Federal Paper Money Issued

The Act of July 17, 1861, authorized the issuance of $50,000,000 in Demand Notes (as they came to be called), augmented by an additional $10,000,000 on February 12, 1862, these being intended for use at par to pay customs duties on imported merchandise.[3]

After the initial hoarding of gold coins in late 1861, increasing in 1862, it became obvious that if more such pieces were minted, they would be immediately hoarded. The federal government in Washington became desperate. On February 25, 1862, another issue of federal paper money, the Legal Tender notes, was authorized to the extent of $150,000,000.[4] These and other notes of the era were printed under contract by private bank note companies.[5] The front or face of each note, from $1 to $1,000, bore designs, inscriptions, a serial number printed in red, and the repro-

[1] In 1864, McClellan was an unsuccessful candidate for president. At certain of the Sanitary Fairs, including the one in Philadelphia in 1864, the public was invited to make contributions for the benefit of soldiers and "vote" for their favorite Civil War personality, McClellan or Lincoln.

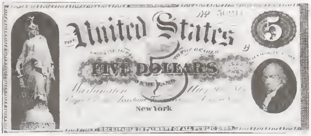
[2] Quantities of silver had been paid out by Mint Director Henry R. Linderman beginning in the summer of 1873, in exchange for Fractional Currency notes; this action, while technically illegal, seems to have been encouraged by President Ulysses S. Grant. However, really large amounts of silver coins were not placed into circulation until 1876. Silver coins and paper money traded at par in certain areas in the late 1870s. Gold coins were not routinely used in daily affairs until late in 1878.

[3] For a time, Demand Notes were exchangeable in gold. Later, beginning in a significant way in July 1862, they sold for a sharp premium above face value (cf. John Jay Knox, *United States Notes*, 1885, p. 97).

[4] This was a maximum. It was provided that "the Demand Notes issued under former acts should be retired and canceled as rapidly as possible." The amount of outstanding notes was to be deducted from the $150,000,000 authorization for Legal Tender notes.

[5] American, Continental, and National. The American Bank Note Co., formed in 1858 by a consolidation of leading companies, was the best known and is still in business today.

A selection of various obverse and reverse designs used to strike copper Civil War tokens of the 1862-4 era. Such pieces were produced in thousands of different varieties and were intended to take the place of federal cents—which were being hoarded—and also to express various political thoughts and to advertise businesses.



$5 Demand Note of 1861, from the earliest widely circulated currency issue of the federal government. (Witham and Sansoucy Collections)

duced signatures of Treasury Department officials. In April 1862 the first notes reached circulation. The reverse of each note was printed in green ink, quickly giving rise to the popular term *greenback*. Interestingly, these were not receivable at par in payment of customs duties. As might be expected, unredeemed Demand Notes of 1861 quickly acquired a small premium for their utility in this regard.[1]

While it was intended that such Legal Tender notes be used at par in commerce, in practice there were many vendors who would not accept paper, and demanded coins. At the offices of specie brokers and bullion dealers a lively trade arose in buying and selling silver and gold coins, always at a significant premium in terms of paper money. Remarkably, not even the Philadelphia Mint would accept Legal Tender notes in payment at par for the Proof coins it

Legal Tender $20 note of the early 1860s, obverse and reverse. Such notes, made in denominations from $1 upward, were extensively used in the East and Midwest, but were not seen in general circulation in California, Oregon, or Washington Territory. (Boys Town Collection)

struck for collectors! To buy such pieces, numismatists had to buy older silver and gold coins and submit them to the Mint in payment.

To answer the call for small change, the Treasury issued Postage Currency notes, beginning with distribution through Army paymasters in August 1862 and to the public in September. These notes, made in denominations of 5¢, 10¢, 25¢, to 50¢, bore the designs of contemporary stamps printed within a border, and with added inscriptions. Similar to stamps, the Postage Currency notes were issued in perforated sheets, to be torn apart by the recipients. By early 1863 about $100,000 of these notes reached circulation per day, but the demand remained unsatisfied.[2]

The Act of March 3, 1863, provided for a new small denomination series, Fractional Currency. Distribution of such notes–5¢, 10¢, 25¢, and 50¢–began in October of the same year. In autumn 1864 a new Fractional Currency denomination, the 3¢ note, reached circulation, but never became popular.[3]

Postage Currency and Fractional Currency notes tended to become dirty and tattered quickly and could not be counted easily. The public referred to them derisively as "stamps." By the mid-1870s a new generation of children in the East and Midwest had reached teen-age years without ever seeing a Liberty Seated silver coin or a gold piece in pocket change.

On February 25, 1863, the "Loan Bill," better known as the National Banking Act, passed Congress. Under its provisions, all banks granted charters by the national government were allowed to deposit government bonds with the treasurer of the United States, after which they could issue notes in an amount limited to 90% of the par value of bonds so give. As circumstances would have it, the First National Bank of Davenport, Iowa, organized on June 22, 1863, Charter No. 15, was the very first National Bank in America to open its doors, not by intention but by mistake. Authorities in Washington, D.C., had instructed banks under the new charter system to start business on a given Monday, but someone misunderstood the directions. Apparently the notice arrived on Saturday, and the bank threw open its

[1] Report of Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, April 7, 1862, to Thaddeus Stevens, chairman of the House Committee of Ways and Means. The premium at that time ranged from ½ of 1% to 1½%; later, the premium rose (cf. John Jay Knox, *United States Notes*, 1885, p. 97).

[2] Neil Carothers, *Fractional Money*, 1930, 177-178.

[3] In 1869 another Fractional Currency denomination, 15¢, was added to the Fractional Currency lineup, but it, too, was never widely used. • In a curious footnote to American financial history, the person in charge of accounting for these issues, Spencer M. Clark of the Treasury Department in Washington, had his own portrait, captioned "CLARK," placed on a five cent Fractional Currency note. Most people thought that William Clark, of 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition fame, was the one being honored! Clark's activities included other surprises, including testimony in a government inquiry which revealed that he hired young girls on the basis of whether they would succumb to his seductive advances.

doors on that very day, beating everyone else by 48 hours!

In the next several years, many banks were chartered in the East and Midwest, but not on the West Coast. By July 30, 1865, the last day of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, there was not a single National Bank in California, Oregon, or Washington. However, residents of San Francisco, most of whom would not have recognized a Legal Tender note or a detested Fractional Currency "stamp," were quite interested in what others were doing elsewhere with the folding stuff. This notice appeared in the *Alta California*, in July 1865. At the end of the article the editor was careful to exclude himself from the opinion stated:

> Mr. R.C. Gridley, of Austin, Nevada, who returned home from the East by the last steamer, after making the rounds of the Atlantic and western states,[1] with the famous Sanitary sack of flour,[2] is now stopping at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in this city.
>
> While in the East he secured the charter of the First National Bank of Nevada, which will go into operation at Austin, Reese River, under the National Banking Law, immediately, with a capital of $200,000. The notes are already countersigned by the treasurer of the United States, and were brought out by Mr. Gridley, ready for issuing. We are informed that it is the intention of the stockholders to commence paying out the bills at an early day to miners and others at its market value, thereby leaving no cause for complaint on the part of anybody, and it is believed that Reese River, by thus taking the initiative in the matter of the national currency, will derive large advantages at the outset over her sister mining territories, in the way of attracting eastern capital for investment in her mines, which, rich as they are known to be, lack the capital necessary for their development.
>
> Mr. Gridley is also of the opinion, judging by what he has seen and heard during his sojourn in the East, that the establishment of National Banks in San Francisco at an early day is already a foregone conclusion. We give this last as his conclusion—not our own.

In the same era, at the Philadelphia Mint the coinage of gold was generally low and was conducted primarily for two purposes: the payment of certain federal debts that were payable in gold and, most important, for international exchange in the conduct of commerce and the Civil War. No gold coins were released into general circulation in the East or Midwest during the war or for nearly 14 years afterward.

The poor Confederacy. It had but little gold in its coffers. One numismatic and financial historian, Herbert M. Bergen, one-time president of the American Numismatic Association, attributed the Confederacy's ultimate downfall to a lack of this precious metal.[3]

Meanwhile, California was sitting pretty. Gold was in abundance.

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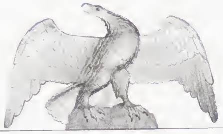
[1] Easterners often referred to Ohio, Indiana, and other *Midwest* states as being "western," and perhaps this region was intended.

[2] The so-called Gridley Sanitary Sack of Flour was used for fund raising for Union soldiers and the Sanitary Commission; on May 28, 1864, it had been sold for $2,075 at the Metropolitan Theatre, San Francisco.

[3] "California Gold and the Civil War," *The Numismatist*, February 1962.

Chapter Four



Money in California

Money in Circulation (1848 to Early 1849)

In the first year or so of the Gold Rush, 1848 through May 1849, money used in California commerce consisted entirely of silver and gold coins. Although some United States silver and gold pieces brought from the East were encountered, the "Spanish dollar" was the unit of choice. Silver eight-reales coins of Spanish design, minted in Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and other countries, were used in everyday transactions, supplemented by gold escudos of various denominations up to and including the large and impressive $16 eight-escudo doubloon. To a much lesser extent, British, French, and other gold and silver coins were used. Each arriving sailing vessel or steamer in the port of San Francisco was apt to discharge passengers with pockets full of diverse coins. Nowhere to be seen in 1848-1849 or for decades thereafter were copper or nickel coins. The large copper one-cent piece, so familiar, so omnipresent in the East, was unknown in circulation in California.

Silver eight reales struck in Mexico (at the Estado de Mexico Mint) in 1829. Such Mexican "dollars," made over a long period of time and in different motifs, were the staple silver coins in West Coast commerce in the 1840s and 1850s and were a virtual necessity for export payments to China. (Morgan, *et al.* Collections)

Paper Money Abolished

Most laws for the conduct of American commerce and finance were made in Washington, DC. The collective wisdom of the House of Representatives and the Senate was thought to be greater than any single state could muster. However, in certain matters of banking, states' rights were paramount.

As events would prove, the legislators in California in 1850 were absolutely brilliant. In time, the state would sail with glory through the years, immune from the great monetary crises that swept the East and Midwest beginning in December 1861, not to overlook the worthless currency remaining in circulation from defunct private banks.

In the California territory on August 1, 1849, delegates were elected to frame the State Constitution, although statehood would prove to be a year away.[1] On Monday, September 17, a draft included this section, taken *verbatim* from the State Constitution of New York adopted in 1846:

> 35. The Legislature shall have no power to pass any law sanctioning in any manner directly or indirectly the issuing of bank notes of any description.

The provision was found to be unfavorable by some in attendance, including J.M. Jones, who felt that by omission the issuance of paper money other than bank notes would be allowed, including checks, scrip certificates, etc., that might pass in circulation. He felt that if banks and other associations could receive deposits of gold and silver, they might logically issue receipts denominated in such metals. Safeguards were needed.

1 Much of the information regarding the State Constitution, including the R.M. Price quotation, is adapted from Ira Cross, *Financing an Empire: History of Banking in California*, 1927.

Another delegate, R.M. Price, felt that to pattern this provision and others on the State Constitution of New York was a mistake, for Californians faced an entirely different set of circumstances. He stated that in 1846 several hundred private banks in New York had imposed a circulation of their bank notes upon the public in the amount of approximately $105,000,000. Some of these had become depreciated or worthless. Unlike New York, where there was no significant source of valuable coinage metal, the mines of California were estimated to contribute $300,000 in gold *per day* to the wealth of the world. Thus, there was no reason to encourage banks in California to distribute paper money of no intrinsic worth. Besides, fresh in the memories of many Californians were the losses and abuses of banking in the East, which on many occasions had forced great hardships on the public. Even the impressively titled Bank of the United States had caused untold hardship to the public when its notes became worthless.

R.M. Price continued:

> Let us provide then the strongest constitutional safeguards against the vicissitudes which we know the people of the United States have suffered. Aye, sir, and this is the time and place to cut off the head of this monster serpent—paper money—which, I fear, may creep in and sting us if we adopt the report of the committee. Our enlightened knowledge on this subject makes us unanimous in the opinion that no bank charters [should be given, and that] no paper money, either of individuals or corporations, ought to circulate as currency.

Price felt that California was dealing from a position of strength, and in time:

> Our commercial capital, San Francisco, is, in my opinion destined to be the center of the exchanges of the world, and is destined to supply the world with a large share of its currency.

Delegate Jones added the telling comment, "We have a metallic currency here which is worth all the banks in the world."

William M. Gwin, later elected United States senator, drew upon his extensive knowledge of financial history and told listeners of the monetary abuses of the Hard Times period, especially of 1837 and the several following years. The public had been swamped with private bank notes, corporate paper money and notes, private tickets, post notes, and more, most of which proved to be absolutely worthless. Gwin related that he had seen over a hundred different forms of money in circulation at that time, and that if an exhibit of such could be made to the delegates, it would be a curious spectacle and would be the sole argument needed to nip in the bud any thought of allowing such paper money to be used in California.

As banks were necessary to the conduct of commerce, Gwin recommended that such should be privately owned, with the officers *personally responsible* for the security of the institutions. If the confidence of the public were to be abused, the officers could be indicted under the law, convicted, and thrown in jail.

The alternative—publicly held banks—was distasteful to Gwin. He went on to comment that the safest banks in American history were private ones. An example was provided by the bank conducted by Stephen Girard in Philadelphia:

> No person had ever lost a dollar by depositing with him [Girard], while others had been beggared through the bankruptcy of the Second Bank of the United States, a corporation.

It was a sorry state of affairs that in 1850 scarcely any federal "loan notes" were in general circulation, and the paper notes distributed by the Continental Congress in the Revolutionary War period, denominations from $1 to $80, remained absolutely worthless. On the other hand, gold and silver coins were always worth their metallic value.

Another delegate to the California Constitutional Convention, C.H. Botts, took up the cry and stated that if individuals or banks were allowed to issue their own paper money, there would be 50 to 100 different kinds of such money in circulation in a short time. Notes that proved to be unsound would become diminished in value, thus causing them to be spent as soon as possible, causing the more valuable notes to be hoarded. Soon, businesses would fail and citizens would suffer, these being the inevitable consequences of paper money that could not be redeemed in coin.

William M. Gwin proposed that:

> The Legislature shall pass penal enactments for the punishment of the officers and stockholders of any association that may be formed under the authority herein granted, or any other person or persons who shall be convicted of making, issuing, or putting in circulation, any bill, check, ticket, certificate of deposit, promissory note, or other paper, or the paper of any bank, to circulate as money.

More discussion continued, and H.W. Halleck, echoing Gwin, proposed this for Section 34 to be added to the original draft:

> But no such association shall make, issue, or put in circulation, any bill, check, ticket, certificate, promissory note, or other paper, or the paper of any bank, to circulate as money.

In short order, Section 35 was discussed, which contained similar provisions. O.M. Wozencraft offered this wording:

> The Legislature of this State shall prohibit, by law, any person or persons, association, company, or corporation, from exercising the privileges of banking, or creating paper to circulate as money.

The Constitution was presented to the voters on November 13, 1849, and was overwhelmingly adopted 12,064

The term *currency* was meant to mean circulating money, not paper. In this instance it referred to coins.

for, to just 811 against. Thus, when California was admitted into the Union on September 9, 1850, it already had a "hard money" economy, with not a piece of paper money in sight. The dependence upon silver and gold coins and the exclusion of paper money prevailed for many years thereafter.

Although years later in the 1870s, certain special National Gold Banks were allowed to issue paper money *payable in gold coins*, and, later, copper and nickel coins as well as paper money circulated in California, the change was a long time coming. Ira B. Cross in *Financing an Empire*, 1927, provided this poignant comment:[1]

> From the days of gold down to 1917-8, travelers and easterners were astonished to find so much gold and so many silver dollars in circulation in California. One of the most common and ready means of identifying a newcomer was his request for paper money. He had had it "back East," he had become accustomed to its use, and consequently asked for it when he reached California. But after residing in the state for a short time he usually adapted himself to the situation and demanded gold and silver coins for his everyday business and personal needs, as did those 'round about him.[2]

Legal Tender Notes in California

In the context of West Coast commerce in the 1860s, Legal Tender paper notes were unusual, as they had no use *at face value* in trade in California or any of the towns or cities along the coast, whereas gold and silver coins were readily accepted at par by all.

However, Army and Navy troops were paid in paper money and could use the notes to buy items at their posts. Similarly, employees in federal offices such as at the Internal Revenue Department in San Francisco, were paid in Legal Tender paper. Such notes, if spent in the outside world, were accepted only at deep discounts. However, postage stamps and revenue stamps (such as those applied to patent medicines, matches, etc.) could be bought at par in Legal Tender notes, this, of course, simply being an exchange of paper for paper. However, the typical government employee had only a limited need for postage stamps and even less use for revenue stamps. He or she wanted money to buy food, shelter, and the other necessities and pleasures of life. It was found that a federal worker with a $20 Legal Tender note had about as much spending power as a worker in the private sector who had $12 to $15 in gold and silver coins.

The history of California in the era of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* is strewn with comments about such paper currency. Examples:

On November 8, 1863, "The *S.S. Moses Taylor* arrived [in San Francisco] with $1,000,000 in Legal Tender notes and $50,000 in revenue stamps."[3] Perhaps poignantly, on the same day noted *humorist* Artemus Ward came to town.[4]

June 3, 1864, "The committee appointed by the Pacific Board of Brokers to reply to a communication from the Washoe Board of Brokers of Virginia City, respecting the introduction of Legal Tender notes into the Board as a base of traffic, reported adversely."[5]

On August 25, 1864, the employees in the office of the Assessor of Internal Revenue went on strike seeking payment of their wages in gold coins or, alternatively, higher wages if they continued to be paid in Legal Tender notes.[6]

Not adding any clarity to the situation was a ruling by the Supreme Court of California to the effect that Legal Tender notes were, indeed, lawful money, *but* it was not required that "every kind of lawful money could be tendered in the payment of every obligation."[7] California passed a "specific contract" law under which debts could be collected in the form of payment specified by the makers of a given contract, who virtually always preferred gold coins, thus officially repudiating the use of Legal Tender notes at par.[8]

Uncle Sam's "greenbacks" continued to be despised by virtually everyone on the West Coast. The situation was sometimes perplexing to easterners, such as Samuel Bowles, the editor of a Springfield, Massachusetts, newspaper who was traveling through the West as part of the entourage of House of Representatives Speaker Schuyler Colfax. Bowles naively thought that patriotic Californians might want to share the problems the East was having with such notes. If there is one truism in economics, it is that money seeks its own level, and citizens will always do what is *most profitable* for them. Accordingly, it is likely that not a word of this seeming nonsense was heeded by any red-blooded San Franciscan! In Bowles' words:[9]

> Paper money has been kept out [of California] by the force of a very obstinate public opinion and the instrumentality of

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[1] Page 289.

[2] Similarly, "California Now Prefers Paper Money to Gold," by Farran Zerbe, *The Numismatist*, February 1921, p. 47, quoted an article by John H. Gerrie in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, which related that the World War "made it necessary for the government to gather up the gold of the country. As state treasurer I [Gerrie] cooperated by releasing several millions in gold for the Federal Reserve Bank [in exchange for paper money].... In collecting taxes I have accepted exchange, thus helping to preserve gold. Franchise tax collections aggregating more than 20 million dollars were made by me this year without asking for a dollar in gold." • Numismatic note by R.W. Julian, (cf. letter, December 27, 1998): "It is my understanding that gold coinage was stopped because of the great quantity of gold coins (mostly of United States origin) that came into this country as a result of the massive orders placed for war materiel by Britain, France, and Russia. The Gerrie statement does not seem to make any economic sense; in the calendar year 1916, for example, exports were about $156 million while imports were $686 million."

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 12 (chronicle of events).

[4] Artemus Ward was the pseudonym of Charles Farrar Browne, a native of Waterford, ME, who at that time was one of the best known humorists in the country. His writings, typically in dialect, satirized the American scene. He is noticed at some length in the author's book, *The Waterford Water Cure: A Numismatic Inquiry*.

[5] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 15 (chronicle of events).

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 17 (chronicle of events).

[7] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, 1848-1888, p. 641, citing the *Portland Oregonian*, August 30, 1864.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 642. Discussion of California and Oregon finances.

[9] Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 1865, pp. 342-344.

state legislation. Our national currency of greenbacks are seen here simply as merchandise; you buy and sell them at the brokers... Of course, being made a "legal tender" by United States law, it is competent to pay a debt here with them, but no man who should do this once...could henceforth have any credit in the mercantile community. All large and long credits are now coupled with an express stipulation that they are on a specie footing, and a law of the state, known as the "Specific Contract Act," protects such arrangements....

These Pacific States, never having had any paper money of their own, and producing plenty of the material for coin, with a mint for its manufacture, it was very natural, although unquestionably selfish and unpatriotic, for them to resist the debasement and superseding of their currency by the Legal Tender notes, which the general government resorted to for means to carry on the war.[1] Their motive in excluding them was, of course, to protect their business operations from the dangerous derangements, often spreading a wide financial ruin, that are the common accompaniments of a cheap and abundant currency. But since only activity and prosperity are seen to have resulted in the eastern states, while depression and dullness have been creeping over affairs in these [the western] states, there has been a gradual change in public sentiment on the subject. Out of San Francisco, and especially in Oregon and Nevada, there is evidently a preponderating feeling now in favor of introducing the national currency. The principal arguments for it are, that the states here ought to share in all the responsibilities of their sisters in the East; if the paper money confers benefits, they should be enjoyed here; if burdens, they too should be assumed by those that are proud to belong to the national Republic.

But San Francisco, as the center of all the business and financial operations of these states, holds all firmly to the present state of things. Her merchants and bankers have prospered all along.... They are not only content to keep the business of the country on a specie basis, but are determined that it shall be so kept.[2]

A further reflection of the disdain for Legal Tender notes in California in the 1860s is provided by the autobiography of noted photographer William Henry Jackson, *Time Exposure*. The time is 1867, the place is Los Angeles (a town of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants at the time), and Jackson is on a year-long trip to the West to "find himself" and help forget the disappointment of a broken engagement to a Vermont lass. He had left a well-paying post as a touch-up artist at a Rutland, Vermont, photographic studio. Nearly penniless, time and again he thought of the cozy circumstances he had left behind. Sometimes he had to sell personal possessions in order to make ends meet.

> Next I bought a newspaper [illegible] and found that greenbacks were accepted only at a discount of 25%. I also found, when I sold my [illegible] a little later, that the discount was [illegible]. But I was nearly flat, and I made no objection when [illegible] handed me $18 in folding money—which meant that I was getting, in purchasing power, $13.50 for a [illegible] that had cost me $20 in Salt Lake City.

Further in California in 1867, at the edge of the Tehachapi Hills inland north of Los Angeles, where he was employed as a ranch hand, Jackson wrote this:[3]

> When at the end of March a man named Ned Carl came through driving an empty wagon to Los Angeles, I quickly arranged to ride down with him. Ward [Jackson's employer] had known about my intentions, and without any haggling he paid the $33.50 due me. Two days later, on March 30, I was back in the city having supper with Ned Carl and his pretty wife. And that night, like any man of substance, I registered with great assurance at the United States Hotel. "Think I shall stay at the hotel as long as my money lasts," I observed in my journal the next day. One feels perfectly independent as long as he can run his fingers through a few gold and silver coins in his pocket.

Gold vs. Paper Money

As a further commentary on coins vs. paper money in California, Langley's *San Francisco Directory and Business Guide*, 1864-5, contains many advertisements for banks, insurance companies, and others dealing in money. Numerous statements are mentioned concerning gold coins, often in boldface type or capital letters, but not a single reference is made to the despised Legal Tender notes. Representative citations:

> **The Bank of California,** southwest corner of Washington and Battery streets: "Capital stock, $200,000, paid up in gold coin."
>
> **Fireman's Fund Insurance,** 238 Montgomery Street: "Capital $200,000 fully paid in gold coin. All losses payable in United States gold coin."
>
> **Pacific Insurance Company,** 436 California Street:[5] "Cash capital $750,000 all paid up in gold coin. All losses payable in United States gold coin."

Bowles reveals his lack of knowledge of California financial history; paper money was prohibited more than a decade before the Civil War began and five years before there was a federal mint in the state (1854).

Bowles' narrative is quite confused and contradictory. In two other accounts, a page apart in his book, he states that greenbacks traded at a 25% discount, then a page later, at a 50% discount. As quoted above, he states in one sentence that business is slow, then a few sentences later that the merchants of SAu Francisco "have prospered all along." Nowhere in San Francisco newspapers of 1864-5 is found evidence of a groundswell desire for federal greenbacks; in fact, the *opposite* is true! And, without realizing what he has written, Bowles gives an excellent précis of why San Franciscans detested greenbacks: "Their motive in excluding them was, of course, to protect their business operations from the dangerous derangements, often spreading a wide financial ruin, that are the common accompaniments of a cheap and abundant currency." Although the discussion could be considered at even greater length, it is relevant to note that easterners, including in Bowles' home state of Massachusetts, were not "patriotic" or "loyal" at the time and continued to hoard gold and silver coins themselves, desiring them more than paper money; they had done this since December 1861.

Jackson, p. 151.

Ibid.

This was a comparatively new bank, with articles of incorporation filed on June 15, 1864. D.O. Mills, one of the most prominent figures in the history of banking in the state, was president; William C. Ralston, also prominent and who later was victimized by a financial scandal, was cashier. The Board of Directors included J. Whitney, Jr., of the California Steam Navigation Co., owner of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. The bank had a branch in Virginia City, Nevada.

The Board of Directors of this firm included John G. Kellogg, who in the previous decade had been prominent in the private minting of gold coins, and J. Whitney, Jr., of the California Steam Navigation Co.

Merchants' Mutual Marine Insurance Company of San Francisco, northeast corner of Front and California streets: "Losses paid promptly in U.S. gold coins. Insure hulls, cargo, freight, and specie to and from all parts of the world." This company underwrote $10,000 in coverage for the cargo of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on her voyage out of San Francisco, July 28, 1865.[1]

California Home Insurance Company, 224-226 California Street: "All losses paid in United States gold coin."

Aetna Insurance Co. of Hartford, Connecticut, 224-226 California Street: "All losses paid here in United States gold coin."[2]

California Insurance Company, 318 California Street (successor to the California Mutual Marine Insurance Co.): "[We are] prepared to issue policies against marine and war risks on hulls, cargoes, freights, commissions, and profits. Also against loss or damage by fire on buildings, merchandise, furniture, etc., in sums not exceeding $20,000 on any one risk. ALL LOSSES PAYABLE IN U.S. GOLD COIN." This company underwrote $20,000 in coverage for the cargo of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on her voyage out of San Francisco, July 28, 1865.[3]

North British and Mercantile Insurance Co. of London and Edinburgh, endorsed by San Francisco bankers Tallant & Co., agent Wm. H. Tillinghast, 414 California Street: "All losses promptly paid in United States gold coin."

C. Adolphe Low & Co., importing, shipping and commission merchants, 426 California Street, agency for Continental Insurance Co.: "Losses promptly paid in United States gold coin."

Columbia Fire Insurance Company of New York, R.B. Swain & Co., agents, 206 Front Street: "Losses promptly adjusted and paid in United States gold coin."

Manhattan Life Insurance Co. of New York, John Landers, agent, southwest corner of Clay and Montgomery streets: "Applicants can pay their premium in *gold or currency*."[4]

California Life Insurance Co. (of New York), agent, Bernhard Gattel, 315 Montgomery Street: "Issues policies payable in U.S. gold coin."

Silver Coins

In the first decade of the Gold Rush, the Spanish-American real or "bit," worth 12½ cents, was the smallest coin in general circulation in San Francisco, although on occasion a medio or half-real, worth 6¼ cents, was seen. In terms of popular pricing, amounts for just about everything in San Francisco seemed to start at 25¢ and go upward from that point.

Silver coins trading at 25¢ included not only the United States quarter dollar, but also the Spanish-American two reales, the British shilling, and the French franc, the last two being worth considerably less in terms of bullion value. Relative to the situation, Edgar H. Adams wrote:[5]

> As every piece of coined money, whether of gold or silver, was hoarded by importers to pay duties, there was the greatest scarcity of currency [coins] in the ordinary channels of trade. When this became evident, a stream of gold and silver coins of all nationalities and denominations began to flow toward California; there were the Spanish and Mexican dollars, or ounces, with their fractions, and the dollars of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, nearly all of superior value and held above par.[6]
>
> To these were added great numbers of French five-franc pieces, intrinsically worth but 93¢, yet passing (except at the Custom House) for one dollar. For fractional currency, all kinds of minor silver coins were accepted, and an immense flood of Spanish pesetas, French francs, and Austrian zwanzigers soon found its way into circulation; none of these had an intrinsic value of even 20¢, but as nothing could be purchased for less than "two bits," or 25¢, all silver approximating the size of an American quarter passed for that amount, and because of these peculiar conditions, coin speculators reaped a rich harvest.

Similarly, the *Annals of San Francisco,* described coins in circulation in the city in 1851:[7]

> Coin was plentiful, and its fair worth was generally looked for. People found it somewhat more difficult to accumulate wealth, or were less foolishly lavish in their means.... Specimens of nearly all the civilized world were in constant circulation. Approximate values were bestowed upon the pieces, and if anything like the mark they readily passed current.
>
> The English shilling, the American quarter dollar, the French franc, the Mexican double-real were all the same value; so likewise were the English crown, the French 5-franc piece, and the American or Mexican dollar. It did not matter that some were worth 25% more than others were. Four single francs were quite as good as the English 5-shilling piece. The smaller silver coins of whatever denomination of every country were all like *bits* and passed for the same value. As for copper money, it was, of course, never seen. A *bit* was the lowest denomination of money, and very little of anything would it buy.
>
> Besides the coins mentioned, there were Indian rupees and German florins and guilders, the many coinages of South America, and, in fact, every piece of money that circulated in Europe and many other parts of the world. The deficiency in the American proper coinage was less amply made up, especially so far as silver money was concerned. In gold there was less a variety of foreign coin, while many European pieces of that metal were in circulation.
>
> The $50 gold pieces called "slugs," and the $10 and $20 gold pieces issued by the United States Assay Office in San Francisco served all the purposes of a regular standard coinage. Before and shortly after the establishment of the Assay Office, large quantities were supplied by about a dozen different parties. But as these coinages were generally of less intrinsic worth, and in purity and weight of metal, than their nominal value, they soon fell into disrepute, and were gradually

[1] *New York Times*, August 26, 1865. In 1864-5 the board of directors included James P. Flint (president), G.L. Taylor (vice president), A.M. Simpson, Isaac E. Davis, George W. Prescott, Jabez Howes, W.H. Hooker, A.L. Tubbs, R.E. Raimond, W.J. Adams, N. Pierce, William Meyer, and W. Frank Ladd. The secretary of the firm, J.B. Scotchler, was also on the staff of the San Francisco Mint. The company was organized on April 2, 1863.

[2] The word "here" is important; apparently in other areas of the United States the company paid in paper money.

[3] *New York Times*, August 26, 1865.

[4] Italics as in the original advertisement. There was no statement as to how beneficiaries would be paid (in currency?).

[5] Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913, p. [illegible].

[6] These particular silver coins were useful in the export trade with China and sold for a premium.

[7] Pages 363-364.

withdrawn from circulation. Some of them were very neatly executed, and stray specimens may still be occasionally found by the curious.

Writing in 1866 in *The Resources of California,* John S. Hittell noted this:

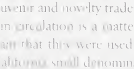
> No copper money is current, nor can anything be bought with a cent. The smallest coin commonly used is a dime; half dimes are rarely seen, and when used two of them are ordinarily put together to make a dime. The general sentiment among the people is opposed to the use of any coin less than a ten-cent piece; they like high wages and high prices, and think that the introduction of half dimes and cents would have a tendency to make us feel poor and to introduce low wages. Many retail dealers, even in the sale of candies and fruits, will therefore not take a half dime, and not a few persons would be ashamed to offer to purchase a half a dime's worth of anything. A half dime is looked upon with contempt and is far more rare in California than a cent in New York. During the last three months, for instance, though I purchase little artifacts every day, I have not seen a half dime. that coin is not made in our mint, nor is there any demand for it.[1] Three-cent pieces, coppers, and nickels are never seen here except as curiosities, and are of no value to make purchases.

In time, the unwanted silver half dime appeared in commerce, but as the denomination was abolished in 1873, its acceptance came too late for it ever to be popular. In the meantime, half dimes proved popular with Chinese residents of California, who often shipped them back to the Orient where they were melted or made into buttons for use on clothing. The Chinese, both in San Francisco and back home in the Orient, disliked gold and strongly preferred silver.[2]

Small Denomination Gold

Beginning about 1852 many tiny gold 25¢, 50¢, and $1 "coins" were made by private parties, often jewelers and suppliers to the souvenir and novelty trades. Whether these were widely used in circulation is a matter of speculation, although it is certain that they were used to some extent. Known today as California small denomination gold coins, these pieces were of irregular weights and uncertain alloys. In time, some were made by lightly gold plating planchets made of copper or other non-precious metals.

Only a few mentions of these have been found in San Francisco newspapers of the 1850s, perhaps indicating that their use in circulation was nominal at best. Among these accounts is an item printed in the New Orleans *Picayune* and picked up by the *Alta California,* August 25, 1852:[3]



Diminutive California gold dollar of 1854, privately struck. Small denomination gold tokens of 25¢, 50¢, and $1 values were made in large numbers beginning in the early 1850s and were popular as souvenirs and, in the early days, possibly also for use in commerce. (Norweb Collection)

> We were shown this morning a gold half dollar, California money, which is so much like the United States gold dollar piece that the best judges would be completely deceived at a first glance. The half dollar piece is lighter in color, and somewhat smaller in diameter, than the dollar. They are of a private issue, and have stamped on them, HALF-DOLLAR CALIFORNIA GOLD 1852.

During the 1850s there were many cambists (listings of coins of various countries and their intrinsic values) distributed for the edification of the public and for use by banks and specie dealers. *Dye's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual,* published in New York in 1855,[4] furnishes an example of a cambist that illustrated such pieces, in this instance a "California gold half dollar" assigned an exchange value of 48¢ and a "California dollar," 98¢. However, it seems unlikely that such coins would have been received for 48¢ and 98¢ respectively in New York City; otherwise, these pieces, of low intrinsic value, would have been shipped there in quantity.

In 1860 the 2nd edition of Dr. Montroville W. Dickeson's *American Numismatic Manual* illustrated several small denomination California gold coins on Plate XIX and gave brief notices of them on pages 226-227. This was an expan-

[1] Actually, half dimes had been struck at the San Francisco Mint beginning in 1863, but they were not widely used in circulation. Most seem to have been exported. Chapter 6 gives more information.

[2] Historical citations are plentiful; *e.g.*, Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855,* 1913, p. vii: "Silver was required for purchases in China; under no conditions would the Orientals accept gold for their merchandise, and thus the San Francisco buyers were compelled to pay a premium in gold for silver coins."

[3] As quoted in *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins,* 1988, p. 641. As it would have taken nearly three weeks for these coins to have traveled from San Francisco to New Orleans and another three weeks for the newspaper account to have come from New Orleans to San Francisco, this would suggest that such pieces were in circulation by at least early July 1852. No round California gold dollar variety dated 1853 is presently known to numismatists. Several varieties of 1853-dated gold half dollars are known, namely Breen-Gillio 428 to 431, hut these all have the denomination expressed as HALF DOL., which is somewhat different from the *Picayune* notation.

[4] Published hy John S. Dye, hullion and specie dealer, 172 Broadway, New York City. Dye had a long career in puhlishing periodicals on counterfeits, hank notes, and coins, with imprints in Cincinnati and New York, possibly beginning in 1847 with *Dye's Wall Street Broker.* There was either much pirating of Dye's information hy others, or licensing arrangements were made, as in 1850, Joseph Arnold, of Philadelphia, issued under his own imprint the same information that had been puhlished in Cincinnati as *Dye's Counterfeit Detector and Universal Bank Note Gazetteer;* in 1856, Hodges & Co., New York City, introduced *Hodges' New Bank Note Delineator, A Complete Spurious and Altered Bill Detector, Giving Correct Printed Descriptions of all The Genuine Notes of Every Denomination, of All Banks Doing Business Throughout the United States and Canada,* containing identical wording and some errors found in an 1855 Dye work. The August 1856 issue of *The Merchants' Magazine* carried a report of a lecture by Dye in which he told of hank note frauds, the making of fake plates for fake banks, the alternation of plates and notes, etc. Years later in 1883, he was the author of *Dye's Coin Encyclopedia,* which dealt with historical and numismatic information, not bullion values.

sion of the 1st edition, slightly differently titled as *American Numismatical Manual*, which had no pictures of the pieces. This may have been the first mention of them in a book expressly intended for coin collectors.

Their use as souvenirs was reflected in the *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*, by James Pollock, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1863. There can be no doubt that the Philadelphia Mint, with veteran numismatists Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois on the staff, was more aware of coin varieties being minted in California than any other government agency or institution at the time:

> It will not be amiss to give some public information in regard to certain small octagonal gold coins, stamped "1/2 dollar, 1859," and "1/4 dollar," without any name, but believed to be coined in California, and sold as pocket pieces, or to gratify the eagerness of coin collectors. Their fineness varies from 425 to 445 thousandths, and the intrinsic value of the "1/2 dollar" is eleven cents, while that of the "1/4 dollar" is six and a half cents. They present a good appearance.

In general, California small denomination pieces made circa 1852-1856 were of insignificant intrinsic value, although short of the face values inscribed on them. No doubt they were a convenience in trade.

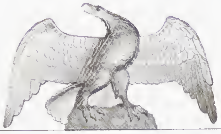
It is highly unlikely that California citizens would have accepted later issues (which were mostly grossly lightweight) as pocket change, although Walter Breen dismisses this thought with this comment.[1] "This amount of underweight was doubtless ignored in token small change; anyone who might have objected most likely received some answer as 'better honest gold than adulterated dust.' " In fact, such pieces were hardly "honest gold," *Dye's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual* notwithstanding. It is to be remembered that beginning in 1855, the San Francisco Mint turned out a stream of 25¢ and 50¢ pieces (in silver).

Regardless of the circumstances of their original use, today these little pieces of gold are highly interesting from a numismatic viewpoint and are enthusiastically collected.[2] Some varieties are very rare and valuable.

[1] *Encyclopedia*, 1988, p. 641.

[2] Important references on the series have been produced over a period of years by several authors including Edward M. ("Ed") Lee (*California Gold Quarters, Halves, Dollars*, 1932), R.H. Burnie (*Small California Territorial Gold Coins: Quarter Dollars, Half Dollars, Dollars*, 1955), Kenneth W. Lee (*California Gold Dollars, Half Dollars, Quarter Dollars*, 1970), David and Susan Doering (*California Fractional Gold*, 1980), and Walter Breen and Ron Gillio (*California Pioneer Fractional Gold*, 1983), the last being the text considered today to be the standard authority.

Chapter Five



Coins and Coiners in California

Coin Shortage in San Francisco

By summer and autumn 1848 there was much gold in San Francisco in the form of dust and nuggets, but little in the way of coins in circulation. Even Spanish-American gold and silver pieces were scarce in proportion to the demand for them. While immigrants by land and sea had brought a few federal gold and silver coins from the East, the supply was nowhere equal to the burgeoning demands of commerce.

Business was growing apace, and in the absence of any minting facility in the area, it was often difficult to find coins to settle invoices, pay customs duties, or for any other purpose. Gold dust traded by weight, but balance scales were apt to be inaccurate, and the purity of the dust was often open to question. Popular frauds included mixing brass filings with gold and using short-weight scales. This was the one time in the early history of the territory and state that paper money might have been useful if backed by gold or other firm assets. Coins were available in distant places and in time could be brought to California. Meanwhile, there was much distress.

In the summer of 1848, Col. Richard B. Mason, Jr., military governor of the California territory, sought to alleviate the shortage of coins for customs payments and instructed the collector at the port to allow payment in gold dust at its local trade value of $16 per ounce. Otherwise incoming shipments would pile up, along with the ever-growing number of derelict ships and other freight that for lack of manpower could not be serviced.

However, good intentions notwithstanding, Mason soon learned that his helpful solution was in contravention to federal law, and that no substitution of gold dust could be made legally for coins. He then revoked his order, substituting a provision whereby merchants could *deposit* gold dust at a very conservative $10 per ounce with the Customs Department, with the privilege of redeeming it by paying the duties in gold or silver coins within 60 days. Numismatic historian Edgar H. Adams wrote:[1]

> Otherwise it was sold at auction, and as such coin was almost unobtainable, they were compelled to stand hopelessly by and see their gold dust, which was worth more than $18 an ounce at the Philadelphia Mint, sold at from $6 to $8 an ounce to the highest bidder—in most cases to a speculator who had somehow come into the possession of acceptable coin.

As ships continued to arrive in record numbers in San Francisco, the problem worsened. Responding to calls from local merchants and bankers, Col. Mason modified his stance slightly, and extended the redemption time to half due in 90 days with the balance to be redeemed within a further 90 days, giving the depositors of gold dust 180 days, or nearly half a year, to secure the full amount in coins. United States coins remained very scarce, and even with this extension, it was difficult for many importers to redeem their gold dust on a timely basis.

Assaying Gold Dust and Nuggets

Native gold dust from most areas in the Sierra foothills yielded precious metal in values from about $17.90 to $18.20 per ounce. However, in trade among San Francisco and inland merchants the generally accepted value for gold considered to be of high quality was $16 per ounce, a handy

[1] Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849–1855*, 1915, p. vi.

Trading in gold dust in San Francisco circa 1853. In what seems to be an improbable scenario, the back counter is piled high with hundreds of thousands of dollars in gold coins and bags of dust. (*Pen Knife Sketches; or, Chips Off the Old Block*, Alonzo Delano, 1853)

equivalent to the popular Spanish American gold eight-escudo doubloon. A problem was that some gold, especially that extracted by the quicksilver (mercury) or amalgam process, was valued lower, often for about $14 per ounce. However, a bag of dust tendered as a bet on a faro table was apt to be taken at $16 per ounce, as the odds were sufficiently in favor of the house that the difference could be made up easily. Most retail merchants were happy with the $16 figure, as any minor shortfall could be made up by the profit margin on the goods sold. Also, any merchant accepting a large quantity of gold dust and nuggets would find that upon assay some gold was worth more than $16 per ounce. While not ideal, the $16 rule seemed to fit the needs of commerce at the time.

As an accommodation, assaying firms were set up. For a fee the assayers would receive gold dust and nuggets, refine them to an agreed standard, usually somewhere between 800/1000ths and 900/1000ths fine, and return the proceeds to the depositors in the form of gold bars, less a processing and service charge. Alternatively, the deposit would be melted and cast into bars of the fineness of native gold as taken from the mines. Under either method, each bar would be stamped with its weight in ounces, its fineness, and its market value based upon $16 per ounce.

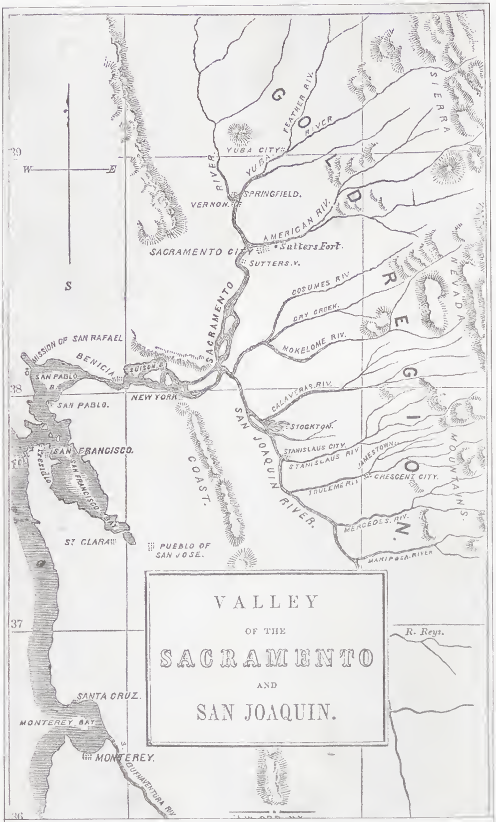
Such bars or ingots were mainly used in transactions among larger private companies and banks, and had little use in everyday commerce. The assayers themselves were a mixed assortment of saints and sinners, as will be seen from the experiences related below. There were many opportunities for fraud. Moreover, assaying as practiced in San Francisco did not always yield consistent results. Sometimes even basic arithmetic such as determining the value of a bar based upon its weight and fineness was incorrect. Time and again, bars and coins made privately in San Francisco would be sent to the Philadelphia Mint, where experienced assayers using sophisticated equipment would calculate a different result.

In view of different values placed on gold dust and the inability of the average miner or merchant to determine its true quality and value, there was much suspicion directed toward bullion dealers, private assayers, and gold traders. Many citizens believed that they were shorted in value, and that gold buyers were reaping great profits by purchasing gold at bargain prices and shipping the metal to the Philadelphia Mint and receiving about $18 per ounce for it.[2]

On July 22, 1848, shortly after the news of the gold strikes on the American River became widespread in California and metal had found its way in quantity to San Francisco, action was taken to solve the worsening problem. Tradesmen and miners met and prepared a petition to Col.

[1] On September 9, 1849, a mass public meeting was held in San Francisco, and commercial interests agreed to accept gold dust at $16 per ounce, but there were many dissentions to the plan (cf. Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849 1855*, 1913, p. viii).

[2] The posted value for absolutely pure gold at the Mint was $20.67 per ounce, however, gold of this purity was not available from California in the early days.



Map showing San Francisco, Sutter's Fort (center), and various gold-bearing branches of the inland rivers. The fineness or purity of gold dust, nuggets, and ore often varied dramatically from one area to another, but this could be determined only by professional assay, not from general appearance. (*Three Years in California*)

Richard B. Mason, Jr., to appoint an official independent assayer to judge the quality of the metal. In this way, both buyers and sellers would have a common standard. Mason was not in favor of the idea, and nothing was done.

The public's lack of confidence continued in those who were buying gold dust and nuggets taken from rivers and embankments, and, increasingly, bars of unrefined metal brought from mines and private assayers were distrusted as well.

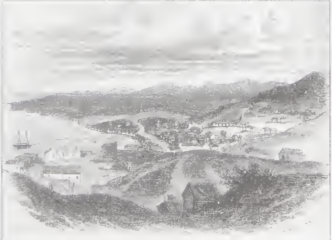
The Fineness of Native Gold

Adding to problems of adulteration and short weight, the fineness or degree of purity of native California gold varied considerably. Relative to fineness of gold dust and

nuggets from various locales, this information from Bancroft will no doubt be of interest to numismatists who have a technical inclination. For others it will reveal why unassayed gold dust could be of widely varying value per ounce. Figures are *averages* from the sources indicated:[1]

> California, Butte County, 900 to 970 or even up to an incredible 990+. "Butte County stands pre-eminent for its fine gold, which has assayed even above 990, and brought $20.40 per ounce." This was the richest of all gold in the state.
>
> Calaveras County, 850 to 960.
>
> Del Norte County, 875 to 950.
>
> Fresno County, 760.
>
> Humboldt County, 726 to 940.
>
> Kern County, 660 fine (the remaining 400 being mostly silver), but as low as 600 fine. This was the lowest quality gold in the state.
>
> Mariposa County, 800+.
>
> Mokelumne County, 900-.
>
> Placer County, 784 to 960.
>
> Plumas County, 846 to 936.
>
> Shasta County, 885.
>
> Siskiyou County, 749 to 950.
>
> Stanislaus County, 920.
>
> Trinity County, 875 to 927.
>
> Tuolumne County, 900, but can be up to 950.
>
> Yuba County, 910 to 950, but with some areas yielding below 900.
>
> Hittell (*Mining*, pp. 49-50) placed the California statewide average at 855; Dana (*Mineralogy*) put the average at 880, and King (*Geological Survey*, 1880-1, p. 382) put the California average at 883.6, compared to an overall United States average of 876. King also included these comparisons.
>
> Colorado, 820.5.
>
> Dakota, 925.8.
>
> Georgia, 922.8.
>
> Idaho, 781.6.
>
> Montana, 893.1.
>
> Oregon, [illegible]

It can be readily seen that gold dust by weight could not have had a standard fine value in trade in California in the Gold Rush era. In addition to the variables introduced by nature, man intruded with various deceptions:[2]



San Francisco in 1849, the year that several private bankers and entrepreneurs began the private minting of coins, mostly $5 and $10 denominations. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

> Admixtures of black sand, etc., were common; spelter[3] and packages with spurious dust and coins were passed. Gold from low-grade districts was transferred to others for admixture with higher qualities. Scales were tampered with, weights were made light, pans were waxed to seize upon gold. Y. Bey and W. Dusugeau manufactured spurious dust in 1855.

Private Coiners of 1849

The year 1849 saw a flurry of private minters producing gold coins of various designs. Such pieces were gratefully received, at least at first, by the coin-hungry public. Gambling parlors, saloons, and other places of public accommodation were delighted to receive coins of stated value instead of gold dust of uncertain fineness and quality. However, the recipients of these non-federal coins had no way of knowing if a $5 gold piece had close to $5 worth of gold or was debased.

For the most part, the coiners of 1849 conducted their affairs privately. Thus, while advertising and newspaper accounts survive, for most there is little knowledge today concerning the quantities produced, the origin of the designs, and other aspects. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, Edgar H. Adams, a reporter for the *New York Sun* who studied and dealt in coins, endeavored to learn as much as possible about these issues. Fortunately, much of his research was done prior to the San Francisco earthquake and fire of April 1906, which destroyed many records. Unfortunately, Adams came on the scene a half century after such pieces were coined, and the opportunity for first-hand interviews with original participants was lost forever. Those who could have done such research during the years in which the coins were minted—such as early dealers and collectors who were active in the eastern cities in the 1850s—had no interest in the subject. If only Montroville W. Dickeson, W.C. Prime, William E. Dubois, or one or another numismatic authors active in the 1850s and early 1860s had taken gathered and published facts, much information presently lost could have been recorded for posterity.

As a result, certain coiners remain shadowy figures today. As an example, at least two $5 gold coins are known depicting a pine tree and bearing the date 1849 and inscriptions of CAL. GOLD and J.H. Bowie. In addition, a gold dollar pattern struck in copper exists. It is believed that Bowie came from Maryland and set up a private mint, but

1 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, p. 419. For further information (not quoted here): A dissertation on various aspects of gold, including fineness of gold from specific areas, was printed in a supplement to the *Alta California*, September 30, 1859.

2 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII. 1860-1890, pp. 164-165.

3 An alloy made to resemble gold, but containing non-precious metals. Sometimes "nuggets" were cast of spelter, and other times "gold" ingots were similarly made.

it is not known what equipment he used, where or by whom the dies were cut, or how long he remained in business. The rarity of his coins suggest that his activities were ephemeral.

Even more mysterious is Templeton Reid, a private coiner, gunsmith, and inventor who had limited success in Georgia in 1830 when he made gold pieces of the $2.50, $5, and $10 denominations from locally-found metal. At an early time Messrs. Eckfeldt and Dubois acquired Reid gold coins marked CALIFORNIA GOLD of $25 and $10 denominations for the Mint Cabinet. Unfortunately, the former coin, with its denomination expressed in Roman numerals as XXV, was swiped in 1858 and never recovered. No other specimen has ever come to light. Today, some scholars believe that Reid contemplated going to California to participate in the Gold Rush, and made some pattern coins with California inscriptions. No doubt a careful modern non-destructive analysis of the remaining $10 coin in the Mint Cabinet (now a part of the National Numismatic Collection at the Smithsonian Institution) would reveal via trace elements whether or not it was made from California metal.[1]

The Pacific Company, the identities of whose owners were not recorded in any known account, turned out 1849-dated $5 and $10 gold coins with a liberty cap and rays design copied from Mexican issues.[2] The coiners may have desired anonymity, for in relation to other private minters, they had larceny in their hearts. An assay conducted by Eckfeldt and Dubois revealed that their $10 gold coins contained just $7.86 in gold, which was far less than even the poorly regarded Mormon gold coins (of which a $10 piece was assayed at $8.52). No doubt the principals were known to San Franciscans at the time and were held in low esteem for their coinage was not long-lived.

Another early entry among private coiners was the partnership of Norris, Gregg & Norris, whose coins were marked simply, "N.G.N." The principals were Thomas H. Norris, Charles Gregg, and Hiram A. Norris, plumbing and hardware contractors who had come to San Francisco from New York.[3]

Alta California noted on May 31, 1849, the existence of:

> a five-dollar gold coin struck at Benicia City, though the imprint is San Francisco. In general appearance it resembles the United States coin of the same value, but it bears the private stamp of Norris, Gregg & Norris and is in other particulars widely different.

The N.G.N. partnership was in business in San Francisco and Sacramento in 1849 and 1850. If any coins were, in fact, made in Benicia City, no details survive as to the appearance and street address of the mint.

Wright & Co., the Miners Bank

The banking firm of Wright & Co., located on the corner of Washington and Kearny streets on Portsmouth Square, petitioned local authorities on August 7, 1849, for permission to strike $5 and $10 gold coins, but the request was denied. In October the company reorganized, now with Stephen A. Wright, John Thompson, Samuel W. Haight, and J.C.L. Wadsworth as partners. Known as the Miners Bank,[4] the outfit was housed in a simple wooden frame structure.

What might have been, but wasn't: A sheet of $10, $20, and $50 notes imprinted "San Francisco," but lacking the name of a bank or other issuer. This sheet was probably made as a stock item by a bank note company in Philadelphia or New York City, circa 1849, and was intended to be used by a California merchant or banking house. However, the California Constitution prohibited the use of paper money, and no such notes are known to have been issued. (Boys Town Collection)

The *Annals of San Francisco* included this mention of the firm as part of a sketch of the city in 1849:[5]

> A certain two-story building known as the Parker House situated on Kearny Street facing the Plaza paid its owners

1 Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois, *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins, Counterfeit Coins and Bullion With Mint Values*, 1851, p. 8, discussed these pieces, noting: "Weights respectively 649 and 260 grains. Being the only two specimens received, they have not been [illegible] for assay, but appear to be of California gold without artificial alloy."

2 The liberty cap and rays motif was also used in American coinage, [illegible] as extensively as on Mexican silver and gold, including [illegible] in San Francisco in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1834 [illegible] used the motif, in 1836 Christian Gobrecht created [illegible] $1 with the motif, and in the 1860s James A. Bolen, [illegible] of Springfield, MA, issued tokens with the design. [illegible] Numismatic tradition (following Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913) has it that this firm was [illegible] Broderick (a famous political figure, who [illegible]) and Frederick D. Kohler, although no direct connection [illegible] lished via extant advertisements, [illegible] as Kohler [illegible] an excellent reputation and as the Pacific Co. gold coins [illegible], there seems to be a contradiction in [illegible].

3 *The New York Directory* of 1849 [illegible] 1848 [illegible] H. Norris, a civil engineer, did business at 62 Gold St. [illegible] 68 Jay St., Brooklyn. Hiram A. Norris [illegible] sailing list of a vessel bound for California in 1849, was [illegible] at the same business address. His [illegible] Charles Gregg, an engineer at the same [illegible] 209 Pearl St., Brooklyn. A New York [illegible] "Norris, Gregg & Norris. Man[illegible] fittings of all kinds for steam, water, [illegible] Beekman and Fulton streets, New York. [illegible] by steam. Tubular boilers of various sizes. Thomas H. Norris, Charles Gregg, Hiram A. Norris."

4 Or Miners or Miner's Bank—punctuation varied.

5 Page 254.

> $120,000 a year in rents. Of this sum somewhere about $60,000 was paid by gamblers who occupied nearly the whole of the second floor. The El Dorado gambling saloon, which adjoined the Parker House...at the corner of Washington Street, which was only a canvas tent of moderate size, brought the rate of $40,000 per annum. In another corner of the Plaza, a small building, which might have been a stable for a half dozen horses, was possessed by Wright & Co., brokers, under the name of the Miner's Bank, for the rent of $75,000.[1] The United States Hotel paid $36,000; a mercantile establishment, for a one-story building, of 20-feet front, paid $40,000, and $70,000 per month was paid for the Custom House....

In late 1849 the Miners Bank issued $10 gold coins of simple appearance, with one side consisting of lettering only–lacking a motif or pictorial design–and an eagle on the other. A few $1 paper notes of the firm, with the printed date of March 1, 1849, are known to exist.[2] The printing was done by Danforth & Hufty, New York City and Philadelphia. Presumably, these were ordered on speculation from the East. It is unlikely that such notes ever circulated, or at least not extensively. Similarly, it is known that in the same year at least one other eastern bank note company made some "blank" notes with a San Francisco imprint, meant to be overprinted with a merchant's or bank's name, not reckoning with the anti-paper money feelings in the territory.

It is believed that Wright's $10 coins were produced in the autumn, apparently before the October 1849 reorganization was completed, for William P. Hoit, assayer of the New Orleans Mint, reported on December 13, 1849, that he had assayed a Miners' Bank $10 nearly two months earlier, and that he had found it to be worth only $9.65. In an era when the public demanded nearly full intrinsic value for minted coins, this amounted to a serious shortfall. Of course, at $9.65, these coins were still far more valuable than those at the bottom of the desirability list, the $10 pieces of the Pacific Co. and the Mormons.

On January 14, 1850, the Miners Bank dissolved.[3] As the Miners Bank $10 pieces no longer circulated at par, the pieces in the hands of the public went to bullion dealers at a discount and were melted. Within a few years they were rare.

The *Alta California* reported on April 11, 1850, an unfair situation, stating that "the issue of the Miners' Bank is

The Miners Bank $10 gold coin of 1849, an early entry in San Francisco private coinage. These were minted by Wright & Co., a banking firm located in a small wooden building on Portsmouth Square a few steps from the El Dorado gambling hall. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

A view of the city of Sacramento from the river of the same name. In this city were several banks and assayers. In Sacramento in 1850, Frederick D. Kohler, the California state assayer, produced gold ingots for use in commerce, and J.S. Ormsby & Co. struck coins of $5 and $10 denominations. (*California Life Illustrated*)

a drug on the market. Brokers refuse to touch it at less than 20 percent discount...." Of course, a 20% discount spelled P-R-O-F-I-T for local bankers and assayers, who were quick to take advantage of the opportunity. After all, buying $9.65 worth of gold for $8 was an easy way to make a living.

It is ironic that the gold issues that were despised in their time or defamed in San Francisco newspapers are for the most part great rarities today, while coins issued by favorite or highly acclaimed firms (such as Moffat and Kellogg) are the most plentiful in numismatic hands!

Ormsby & Co.

Inland in Sacramento, J.S. Ormsby & Co. began minting operations in 1849. Apparently an extensive assaying, smelting, refining, and coining business was conducted. Although specimens of the Ormsby coinage, made in the denominations of $5 and $10, were once plentiful, today they are great rarities. The pieces, which bear no date and have as part of the design the initials JSO, were struck by a sledgehammer rather than a coining press. Years later, an old-timer recalled the operation:[4]

> A private mint was established in Sacramento in 1849, and continued through the following year, by J.S. Ormsby & Co. The company consisted of Maj. Ormsby, who was killed by the Indians in the Winnemucca War, famous in the early an-

1 This $75,000 rent figure was later quoted and requoted by many historians. Undoubtedly, this rent was for just a short time, as by autumn 1849 the shortage of space had eased, and many new structures were erected. Later, the Verandah was put up on the site of Wright & Co. and became a famous gambling hall and saloon with upstairs rooms for assignations with ladies.

2 Richard Doty, *America's Money, America's Story*, 1998, p. 103, illustrates a $1 note, inked serial no. 27; the identical note is illustrated by Don Kagin, *Private Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States*, 1981, p. 100.

3 Notice appeared in the *Alta California*, January 16, 1850.

4 *San Jose Pioneer*, issue of May 5, 1877 (quoted by Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913, p. 64).

> nals of the State of Nevada, and his brother, Dr. Ormsby, who some years after represented the County of Sonoma in the California Assembly. This establishment, which was located on K Street, just below the site of the Golden Eagle, did an extensive business, the miners bringing dust to be coined forming a line and awaiting their regular turn. The gold was melted here, and without alloy, as it came from the mine, cast into bars, rolled into strips, the rollers used for this purpose being still in the possession of Dr. Light, a leading dental surgeon of Sacramento, who was the chief operator of the establishment at a salary of $50 per diem.[1]
>
> Coins of the denominations of $5 and $10 were issued, stamped with the name of the proprietors, who received a royalty of $4 on every $20 coined. It is the opinion of the gentleman named as the chief operator of the concern, who was the melter and aided by an assistant rolled out the bullion and struck the dies with a sledge hammer, that the crucibles used in melting the dust, and which have long been buried by the filling of the street, contain a large amount of gold, so wasteful was the operation and so plentiful the precious metals, in those days which constituted the flush time in California.

It is doubtful if any depositors of gold would have allowed Ormsby a "royalty"–or 20%–of "$4 on every $20 coined." At their laboratory within the Philadelphia Mint, Eckfeldt and Dubois assayed the Ormsby $10 at $9.37.

Frederick D. Kohler

On April 6, 1850, nearly 400 residents of San Francisco drafted a petition and sent it to the California Legislature, requesting that the office of State Assayer be established to refine gold and issue ingots with appropriate markings to indicate fineness, weight, and value. On April 12 a more specific petition was sent to Governor Peter H. Burnett requesting that experienced and well regarded private assayer Frederick D. Kohler be appointed to such a post.[2] Burnett, a highly educated and intelligent man, would later write memoirs of his experiences.

On April 20, the Legislature responded favorably and passed legislation providing that "There shall be established in the city of San Francisco a state office for assaying, melting, and refining gold." The State Assay Office of Gold was to have two competent persons, appointed by the governor, to perform the duties, one being known as director and the other as the state assayer. The director was to obtain a set of accurate weights from the Philadelphia Mint to use as the standard. Further the State Assayer was to

> carefully refine and assay any or all gold dust or bullion placed in his hands by the director for that purpose, and to cause the same to be made into ingots or bars, in the form of an oblong square, and of such weight as shall be desired by the depositor. Provided, that no ingots or bars shall be made or issued of less weight than two ounces....
>
> The State Assayer shall regularly number and stamp upon the ingots or bars thus made the true value in dollars and cents, and the correct weight in carats, fineness thereof in accordance with the United States Mint standard; also the letters CAL., the date, and his own initials in plain letters over the words "State Assayer," and upon each end and side of any ingot or bar so issued, some uniform stamp or impression, and shall, as soon as thus prepared, place it in the hands of the director, taking his receipt in a book kept by the assayer for that purpose, and the director shall hand it over to the depositor, if demanded, within four days after the deposit of the dust, unless the time shall be prolonged by the depositor by a written agreement, when the weight given shall be returned to the director, who shall cancel and keep the same.
>
> The State Assayer and director shall be entitled to charge and collect from each depositor one percent each upon the value stamped upon the ingots or bars issued, out of which they shall pay all expenses attending upon their duties as prescribed in this Act. The balance shall be equally divided between them. They shall also in addition collect and retain in their possession three-fourths of one percent upon the total amount assayed and issued by them, which sum so retained they shall at the end and expiration of every 60 days, pay or cause to be paid into the State Treasury for the use of the State....
>
> All ingots or bars of gold bearing the stamp of the State Assayer, as provided by this act, shall be received in payment of all state and county dues, taxes, and assessments, at the value expressed therein in dollars and cents, provided that such ingots and bars have not been mutilated nor reduced in size, weight, or value.

It was further provided that the governor, if petitioned to do so, could establish branch State Assay offices in Sacramento, Stockton, or Sonora. It was stated that if an official United States branch mint were to begin operation, the office of state assayer would be abolished forthwith.

The legislation did little to help the coin shortage, as the minimum bar size was to be two ounces, hardly useful for everyday transactions by citizens. Matters were not helped by a provision under an earlier act–that of April 8, 1850–which prohibited the coining of money by individuals. As it developed, this prohibition was generally ignored, as the necessities of commerce superseded and overwhelmed the law. In May 1850, Governor Burnett appointed O.P. Sutton as the director and, in response to the earlier petition, named Frederick D. Kohler as the State Assayer.

Just before entering into his assignment for the state, Kohler sold his private assaying business to a partnership known as Baldwin & Co., which was located in the same building used by the State Assay Office, on the south side of Portsmouth Square, close by the City Hotel and only a

[1] Light arrived in California in August 1849, coming from Claremont, Bethel County, Ohio. In the 1850s Light was a prolific counterstamper on his own account (exclusive of the Ormsby connection) of silver and gold coins. In the same city, Sacramento druggist J.L. Polhemus counterstamped even more pieces than Light did.

[2] Kohler, earlier a jeweler and alderman in New York City, came to California in 1849. In partnership with David C. Broderick, he operated an assaying business in San Francisco. Both Kohler and Broderick had been firemen in New York. When they reached California they became active in fire protection, with Kohler becoming the first chief engineer and Broderick attaining the post of foreman of the Empire Company. Broderick later became a prominent California politician and was elected a senator. Much about Broderick is recorded in various histories of the state.

few steps from the El Dorado gambling hall and other attractions of the night.

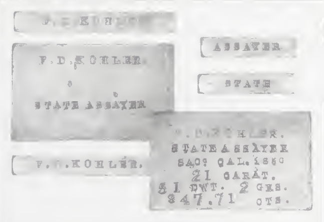
On the very first day of operation, the State Assay Office received nearly 5,000 ounces of gold. Thus, the value of the facility was demonstrated quickly. One deposit included a gold bar on which a private broker had marked the value of $519, having bought the metal at $14 per ounce. After smelting, the bar, which originally weighed 689½ pennyweight, was reduced slightly to 682½ pennyweight. The fineness was 20½ carats (out of a possible 24 carats, this bar equal to 864.5/1000ths pure), and the value was $570.54, or over $50 more than the broker had indicated on the bar.[1]

On July 1, 1850, a branch office in Sacramento was ready to do business.[2] Located near the corner of Third and J streets, the depot was in the heart of the city's commercial district, not far from where the Fashion, a first-class saloon, would be opened later by John C. Keenan, whose wife would in time have a connection with the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. The mint of J.S. Ormsby was close by in the same city.

A November 20, 1868 article in the *Alta California* gave the story of a pioneer who had observed Kohler's office on Portsmouth Square:[3]

> Nineteen years ago I gazed into the Assay Office of Fred Kohler, situated on the south side of Clay Street, watching for the first time the process of converting gold dust into bars, and the chipping of the bars into $50 ingots. 'Slugs' was the name given to them. The "bankers," monte, faro, and others, being short of coin, and having plenty of dust, had it converted into slugs of that denomination, which they circulated as freely as any other coin, the stamp of the assayer in all cases being taken at its true value. [Coins of] Wass, Molitor & Co., Moffat & Co., [an assayer at San Jose][4] and others of Mormon coinage, circulated as late as 1852, when they finally disappeared, the octagonal slugs taking their place. The actual value of Kohler's slugs being $52 at the Philadelphia Mint. —C.F.B.H.

While the State Assay Office should have solved many problems, human cupidity had not been reckoned with.



Gold ingot of $47.71 value issued by Frederick D. Kohler, California State Assayer. This bar is one of two known to exist from Kohler's Sacramento office. (Estate Collection of Albert Holden Norweb)

Certain business establishments refused to accept the State Assay Office ingots, preferring to weigh gold dust or bullion themselves in order to make an additional profit later when the raw metal was sold. On July 15, 1850, the *Sacramento Daily Transcript* commented on this practice:

> But the bankers and others in San Francisco interested in keeping gold below its real worth to further their own ends were not to be so easily checked in their lucrative operation. Previous to the appointment of the Assayer they called a public meeting, formed an association, and by combined efforts succeeded in defeating the good end which the law aimed to secure. Strange to say, that up to this time the people—merchants, miners, mechanics, laborers—have permitted this combination to hold the sway, decrying the value of the ingots, *refuse* to receive them at their par value, and thus *prevent* their general circulation and the good results which would necessarily have followed.
>
> First, then, the miner parts with his gold at $16 the ounce. If he has 50 ounces it nets him in gold coin $800; but suppose ingots are circulated at their par value, as they should be, the miner then takes his 50 ounces to the assayer's, where he pays for assaying it, say $1 per ounce, and it yields him in ingots, after the expense is paid $17 per ounce. Fifty ounces at $17 = $850—making a difference of over six percent in his favor. But a still greater saving might be effected on quicksilver gold than six or even eight percent. Quicksilver gold brings only $14 per ounce. Does the miner and do the people generally know that this gold is worth more intrinsically than any other? If they do not, the Assayer will tell them so. The particles of gold taken up by the quicksilver are doubly refined and pure, and those who ship it to the States make the enormous profit of from $4 to $5 on every ounce shipped, all of which comes out of the pocket of the miner and laborer.
>
> The question may be now asked, what is the true value of the ingot, and it will probably surprise some of our readers to be informed that these ingots which are refused by this combination are worth more than American gold coin, and yet such is the case. Every ingot stamped $37 will realize $40 in gold coin at the United States Mint. Shall the whole community suffer in order that those who are engaged in this gold shipping business may be aggrandized? We say emphatically No! Let us receive the ingots.

The State Assay Office persevered, and through 1850 it processed much gold and delivered ingots to depositors. No doubt the faro and monte tables around Portsmouth Square had piles of these little "bricks." Federal coins in circulation remained scarce.

[1] Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913, p. 9.

[2] The *Sacramento Daily Transcript* dated June 29, 1850 (article with date line of June 28) contained the notice: "STATE ASSAYER'S OFFICE. The undersigned have opened an office on Third, near the corner of J Street, Sacramento City, and on the 1st of July will be prepared to receive gold dust for smelting and assaying in accord with the provisions of a law passed by the Legislature of the State, April 20, 1850. John Bigler, director. F.D. Kohler, Assayer."

[3] This recollection has some inaccuracies, such as the "chipping" comment and the note that private gold coins of less than $50 disappeared after 1852 (in fact, they were still being *minted* as late as 1855). There is no question concerning assays performed at the Philadelphia Mint which showed that there was some variation in Kohler's work, and on the average his ingots were worth about 1% or 1½% more than the value stamped on them.

[4] No coins are known today with the imprint of an assayer from this city.

Plate 1 of *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins*, by numismatists and Mint employees Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois, 1851 edition. The following coins are numbered per the plate:

Top row: No. 1: $5 gold, N.G.N. (Norris, Gregg & Norris), San Francisco, 1849. Such pieces were among the first to be privately struck in California and were in circulation by May of that year. • No. 3: $5 gold, Oregon Exchange Co., 1849. • No. 6: $5 gold, Moffat & Co., San Francisco, 1849.

Middle row: No. 4: $10 gold, Miners Bank (Wright & Co.), San Francisco, 1849. • No. 5: $10 gold, Moffat & Co., San Francisco, 1849.

Bottom row: No. 11: $5 gold, Pacific Co., San Francisco, 1849. Little is known about the origin of these pieces. All Pacific & Co. coins are considered to be great rarities today. • No. 12: $5 gold, Massachusetts & California Co., 1849. Possibly a pattern issue. It is not known if this firm ever struck coins for general circulation. • No. 21: $5 gold, Schultz & Co., 1851. Once made by the thousands, these pieces soon disappeared from circulation.

The 1851 (source of the illustrations reproduced here) and 1852 editions of the Eckfeldt and Dubois volume furnish the most extensive information about California gold coins to appear in a numismatic publication up to that point, the illustrations having been taken from *Bankers' Magazine*. Both gentlemen had been at the Mint for a long time and were keepers of the Mint Cabinet, a collection which had been started in June 1838. With an eye toward posterity, Eckfeldt and Dubois saved numismatically interesting gold coins that had been shipped to Philadelphia as part of deposits for melting or assay. Their attention to privately-minted California coins antedated any other known numismatic interest by many years.

Plate 2 of *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins:*

Top row: No. 10: $10 gold, Pacific Co., San Francisco, 1849. • No. 25: $2.50 gold, Mormon coinage, Salt Lake City. • No. 7: $10 gold, Templeton Reid, California, 1849. The only known specimen. It is not known if Reid ever reached California, or whether this and a related $25 coin (Plate 5) were made in the East.

Middle row: No. 16: $10 gold, "Horseman" type by Baldwin & Co., San Francisco, 1850. One of the more innovative designs of the era. Rare, as are all Baldwin gold coins. • No. 7: $10 gold, J.S. Ormsby & Co., Sacramento. A great rarity today as are all Ormsby coins.

Bottom row: No. 19: $10 gold, Dubosq & Co., San Francisco, 1849. Only a few are known. • No. 18: $5 gold, Baldwin & Co., San Francisco, 1850. • No. 17: $10 gold, Baldwin & Co., San Francisco, 1851.

Plate 3 of *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins:*

Top row: No. 23: $10 gold, Mormon coinage, Salt Lake City. This is the rarest of the Mormon denominations. • No. 20: $5 gold, Dubosq & Co., San Francisco, 1850. Another rarity. • No. 2: $10 gold, Oregon Exchange Co., 1849. This is the rarer of the two Oregon "beaver" coins.

Middle row: No. 13. $10 gold, Cincinnati Mining & Trading Co., San Francisco. Little is known about this firm. • No. 22: $20 gold, Mormon coinage, Salt Lake City. The first American coins of this denomination; made a year before federal $20 gold coins were first struck for circulation.

Bottom row: No. 26: $5 gold, Dunbar & Co., San Francisco, 1851. Rare. • No. 24: $5 gold, Mormon coinage, 1849. • No. 14: $5 gold, Cincinnati Mining & Trading Co., San Francisco, 1849. Another great rarity.

Plate 4 of *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins:*

Top row: 10 reals, silver, of New Grenada. • $50 gold, octagonal "slug" by Augustus Humbert, U.S. Assayer of Gold, San Francisco, 1851.

Bottom row: No. 8: $25 gold, Templeton Reid, California, 1849. A unique denomination, the only $25 issue made. This coin, the only specimen known, was stolen from the Mint Cabinet in 1858 and never recovered. • No. 15: $20 gold, Baldwin & Co., San Francisco, 1851.

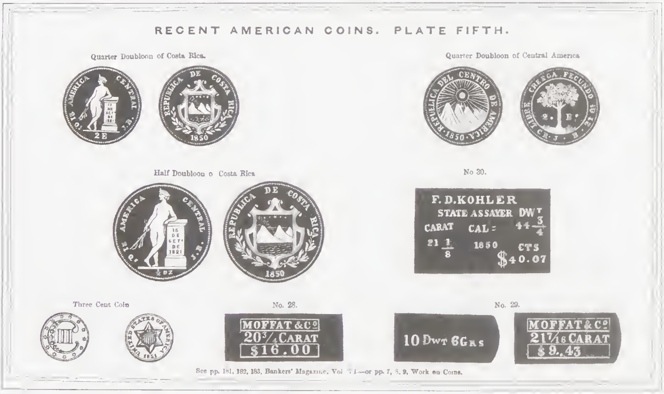


Plate 5 of *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins,*
various issues including the following gold varieties made in California:

Middle row: No. 20: $40.07 gold ingot, F.D. Kohler, California State Assayer, San Francisco, 1850

Bottom row: No. 28: $16 gold ingot, Moffat & Co., San Francisco, undated (1849). Ingots of this denomination were very popular as they were equivalent in trade value to one ounce of gold. • No. 29: $9.43 gold ingot, Moffat & Co., San Francisco, undated (1849); views of reverse and obverse.

When the *United States* Assay Office began operations in San Francisco early in 1851, the *State* Assay Office was discontinued. In the same year this report concerning Kohler was given by Mint officials Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois:[1]

> The issue of bars by F.D. Kohler, Assayer of the State of California, commenced in May 1850. They are of various sizes, from about 40 to 150 dollars. We find a slight undervaluing in his basis of calculation, and generally an error of assay in the same direction; so that on the average his bars are worth at the mint one percent, perhaps one and a half, more than the value stamped upon them.

Eckfeldt and Dubois were both accomplished numismatists and tended the Mint Cabinet, which had been founded in June 1838. In the late 1840s and 1850s they became the first "collectors" of bars and private California gold coins, adding pieces of interest to the Mint display. It was not until years later that there was a widespread interest among others in numismatic circles.

Later, Kohler continued the assaying business on his own account. He also served as alderman of the Sixth Ward of San Francisco and as county recorder. Upon his death, December 6, 1864, he was widely mourned.

Moffat & Co. (1849-1853)

Moffat & Co., established in 1849 by John Little Moffat and his partners, soon became one of the most important and, in time, the most enduring of the private coiners, the darling of the local newspapers. Its coins, ranging in denomination from $5 to $20, were readily accepted in commerce by merchants and the public alike. Similar to the story of other California coiners, Moffat came from the East.[2] On February 15, 1849, the *New York Tribune* carried this item:

> The good bark [illegible] sails today from the foot of Wall street. Whatever [illegible] adventurers [illegible] medium of [illegible] This end may be obtained through the operations of Messrs. Moffat & Co., [illegible] and [illegible] to supply the want [illegible] to [illegible] stamp to [illegible] of a [illegible] and con[illegible] Mr. John L. Moffat [illegible] They [illegible]

Arriving in San Francisco in mid-May, Moffat and three associates—Joseph R. Curtis, Philo H. W. Perry, and Samuel H. Ward—secured premises at the southeast corner of Montgomery and Jackson streets, soon relocating to the corner of Clay and Dupont streets close to the day and night activities of bustling Portsmouth Square. On view at their office

$16 gold ingot issued by Moffat & Co. in the summer of 1849. Such pieces represented the current trading value of one ounce of gold in San Francisco and found ready use in commerce in an era in which coins were scarce. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr., Collection)

were testimonials secured before their departure from New York, including an endorsement from R.J. Walker, secretary of the Treasury. In June or July, 1849, Moffat began making rectangular gold ingots stamped with their value, usually the convenient sum of $16 (equal in trade to a gold doubloon), but ranging from $9.43 to $264.

In the summer of 1849 Moffat struck its first gold coins, $10 pieces from dies by George Ferdinand Albrecht ("Albert") Kuner, a Bavarian diecutter who arrived in San Francisco on July 16, 1849, and who was to go on to make dies for many other issuers and institutions including, years later in 1862, the pattern $10 and $20 gold coins of British Columbia. Upon assay months later at the Philadelphia Mint, the Moffat $10 coins were found to have been of exceptionally high intrinsic value, averaging nearly $9.98 for the early issues, although a later assay put the figure at $9.78.[3]

Moffat went on to strike coins of other denominations, all of which were highly regarded by the majority of people in San Francisco financial circles. Not only did Moffat make a profit from refining and coining, but there was quite a bit of money to be made by buying up the discredited gold coins of other firms for values considerably less than their bullion value. The issue of *Alta California* dated April 11, 1850, reported on the generally poor reputation that private coins had at the time, speculating that Moffat's coins, currently worth par, might soon be worth less also:

> The issue of the Miners' Bank is a drug on the market. Brokers refuse to touch it at less than 20 percent discount. Moffat's issue will probably soon be no better; he already refuses to redeem it in American gold. Those who have it would do well to get five-franc pieces to the dollar, which is really seven percent discount for it, at Moffat's counter now, as it is not impossible that they may refuse to pay even that for it soon.

The principals of Moffat must have made peace with

[1] *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins*, by Eckfeldt and Dubois, 1851, p. 9.

[2] In New York City, Moffat had been a partner in Wilmarth, Moffat & Curtis. In recent times the firm had experienced some financial difficulties, prompting Moffat and Curtis to leave New York and seek their fortune in the West.

[3] Ironically, this figure is not much different from Baldwin & Company's $10 coins which assayed at $9.74, but which—unlike the $10 coins of Moffat—were of tarnished reputation; Baldwin coins are discussed subsequently in the present text.

the press, for no more unfavorable notices appeared concerning their coins.[1]

Prices Current, a financial publication issued in San Francisco, noted the following values on December 14, 1850:

> Gold dust $16 to $16.25; quicksilver [gold refined by mercury] $15 to $15.50; Moffat's coin, par; doubloons $16; sovereigns $4.85; 20-franc pieces $4, or at the Custom House $3.85; 10-guilder pieces $4; ten-thaler pieces $8; Spanish dollars $1; Mexican dollars $1; Peruvian dollars $1; Chilean dollars $1; 5 francs, 95 cents.

It was further noted that at the time $1,500,000 worth of coins was stored in the Custom House, thereby making pieces very scarce in general circulation. During the same period in 1850 most private gold coins other than Moffat's were quoted at a discount of 8% or more—sometimes much more, as in the instance of Mormon coins.

A notice prepared December 24, 1851, appeared in the *Alta California* over a month later on February 6, 1852:

> Co-partnership noted. The firm heretofore known and existing under the name and style of Moffat & Co. is this day dissolved by mutual consent, the entire interest of the special partner, John L. Moffat, having been purchased by the remaining partners, who have the right to use the name of Moffat & Co.

The declaration was signed by John L. Moffat, Joseph R. Curtis, Samuel Ward, and Philo H. Perry. This was further stated:

> The firm will hereafter consist of the undersigned remaining partners, and its business until further notice will be conducted under the name and style of Moffat & Co.

The addendum was signed by Curtis, Perry, and Ward. However, Moffat had made a special arrangement with the firm and his name later appeared in print in connection with the company.[2]

Meanwhile, at the Philadelphia Mint

In far-off Philadelphia at the Mint, a great deal of interest in the new coins and gold bars arriving from California continued to be shown by Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois. Capable metallurgists as well as knowledgeable numismatists, these two men supervised the Mint Cabinet and in 1842 had published a book, *A Manual of Gold and Silver Coins of All Nations,* which was widely distributed to banks and bullion and specie brokers. In 1846, Dubois' *Pledges of History: A Brief Account of the Collection of Coins Belonging to the Mint of the United States,* was published, but saw limited circulation.

In 1850 Messrs. Eckfeldt and Dubois published a small book of 61 pages, *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins, Counterfeit Coins, Bullion with Mint Values.* This was intended for use by bullion and exchange brokers and gave exchange rates for various coins struck in precious metals. Further, it furnished a useful supplement to the 1842 *Manual of Gold and Silver Coins* by the same authors. Included was information on gold coins privately minted in California.

This work was also issued in modified form in 1851 and 1852, these two later versions also including a reprint of the text of Dubois' 1846 *Pledges of History* work, the latter being out of print at the time. As is true of the 1842 book by the same authors, the 1850 volume and its two later editions were distributed in fairly large quantities. Some had tiny samples of California gold flakes mounted on an inside page, an interesting promotional idea.

Eckfeldt and Dubois were regarded as being very knowledgeable concerning the values of the new gold coins being made in quantity in California. As specimens were received in bullion deposits or sent for evaluation and comment, the two men gave their findings, which were viewed as unimpeachable authority. Among the products of various minters and assayers, Moffat & Co. bars were received with regularity. It was found that while the weights of Moffat ingots were correct, the fineness or value would often be higher or lower than that marked on the pieces, "varying grossly," they said. "What has surprised us, both in this case and that of the private mint in North Carolina [Christopher and Augustus Bechtler], is that the valuation should be wrong even upon their own data, being deducible by a simple rule of arithmetic." In other words, using the fineness and weight stamped on the bars as a means for calculation, in combination with the current value, the value did not conform to what should have been correct.

However, Moffat could do no wrong in the eyes of the San Francisco press, and such comments as "varying grossly," which might have sunk the fortunes of others such as the likes of Baldwin & Co., were not printed.

Assays by Eckfeldt and Dubois at the Philadelphia Mint proved that $10 pieces issued by J.S. Ormsby in Sacramento were worth $9.37, and the Pacific Company's $5 and $10 pieces of 1849 were worth just $4.48 and an incredibly low $7.86 respectively.

Also of insufficient gold content were Mormon coins imported from the Great Salt Lake. Made in the denominations of $2.50, $5, $10, and $20, these issues circulated at a discount ranging from 10% to 25%. Analysis indicated that a typical Mormon $10 was worth about $8.70. Mormon gold coins circulated primarily in Salt Lake City, where by fiat the Mormon Church supported them at face value, regardless of their low metallic value.

[1] Subsequently, Moffat's non-redemption [illegible] was purposely omitted from San Francisco newspaper accounts of private coinage. Similarly, certain unfavorable things stated in print by Eckfeldt and Dubois about Moffat & Co.'s lack of precise assaying and calculating techniques (quoted subsequently in the present text) were not printed in the San Francisco papers.

[2] Moffat & Co. prepared a notice on April 26, 18[illegible], published in the *Alta California* the next day, stating that Moffat was by that time a "special partner." This agreement was to remain in effect until February 14, 18[illegible] (information courtesy of Dan Owens).

In January 1850, Mr. Woodworth, of the California Legislature, introduced a bill to curb perceived coinage abuses. The text noted that various persons were making coins but were refusing to redeem the same in legal money of the United States, thereby inflicting an economic hardship on the population and deceiving the people. It was further stated that the coinage of such pieces was in direct violation of federal counterfeiting laws. A remedy was offered:

> Therefore be it resolved that all such persons as have made or caused to be made and circulated such representations of money be compelled by this Act to redeem all such pieces of coin or money as they may have issued or caused to be issued, within 30 days after the passage of this Act. And all such persons refusing to redeem the same within the time prescribed by the law in good and lawful money of the United States, and all persons who hereafter shall make or cause to be made, or issue or cause to be issued, 'tokens,' coins, or pieces of metal or other substance representing money, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to such penalties as are imposed by the laws of the United States upon counterfeiters and coiners.

This elicited a strong response from Moffat & Co. stating that for a long time the private minting of coins had been an American tradition, dating back to the Bechtler coinage of the 1830s, and that the problem was not with such coins *per se*, but with the integrity of certain issuers. A coiner of good reputation would readily redeem his coins or bars at the value stated, as, indeed, Moffat stood ready to do *on a limited basis*. On occasion, Moffat had refused to redeem its own coin.[1] Left unsaid was the fact that no private coiner could have enough other gold coins on hand to redeem a large quantity of its issues if they were presented in a short time in a "run." In fact, the general unavailability of federal gold coins provided the *raison d'etre* for Moffat, Baldwin, and other coins.

Humbert and the U.S. Assay Office of Gold

Responding to complaints, justified and otherwise, about the integrity of privately minted coins and gold bars, in September 1850 Congress authorized the secretary of the Treasury to make a contract with an established assaying business in California, to affix the stamp of the United States to bars and ingots. News of this took weeks to reach the West Coast.

By January 1851, following an exchange of correspondence, Moffat & Co. received the nod. Appointed as United States Assayer of Gold was Augustus Humbert, a New York City engraver and watchmaker. Humbert is believed to have arrived in San Francisco on January 8.[2]

The *Alta California* published this advertisement in several issues beginning on January 22, 1851:

> UNITED STATES ASSAY OFFICE. We give notice that on or about the first of February ensuing we will be prepared to receive gold dust for smelting and assaying, and forming the same into ingots and bars, in accordance with our contract with the Secretary of the Treasury, authorized by act of Congress approved September 30, 1850, under the supervision of the United States Assayer, August Humbert, Esq., who will cause the United States stamp to be affixed to the same.
>
> MOFFAT & CO.
>
> Due notice will be given of the removal of the United States Assayer's office to Montgomery Street.

$50 octagonal gold "slug" produced by Augustus Humbert, United States Assayer of Gold, California, in 1851. Humbert's name appears on the edge (not visible in the photograph). The fineness of the gold is .880, as it was difficult at the time to refine the metal to the federal coinage standard of .900 (although this was later done). The obverse die is believed to have been the work of Charles Cushing Wright, New York City diesinker. The reverse is a wavy engine-turned design perhaps reflective of Humbert's previous occupation as a maker of watch cases. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

One of the first things Moffat did was to use Humbert to assay the products of competing San Francisco firms, leading to their defamation and downfall (including Baldwin & Co., subsequently discussed), while at the same time providing unjustified profits for Moffat, James King of William, and others who bought up the discredited coins at undeservedly deep discounts.

In 1851 many thousands of $50 gold coins of octagonal shape were produced under the supervision of Humbert and with his name on each. The earliest were from dies believed to have been made in New York by Charles Cushing Wright and brought from New York City by Humbert. These large pieces, called "slugs" in popular parlance (for it was said that several, if wrapped in a kerchief, would be ideal to "slug" someone), helped with large transactions, although an unexpected complication arose when it was adjudged by the government that such $50 pieces were not legal tender! While the large and impressive $50 coins were easy to count, and figured heavily in large domestic and export transactions, there was still a shortage of smaller gold denominations.

[1] *Alta California*, April 11, 1850, quoted earlier in the present text.

[2] New research by Dan Owens using contemporary accounts; earlier, conventional numismatic wisdom was that he had arrived at the end of January.

In Early 1851

Production of pieces of the $5, $10, and $20 value continued in the private sector during the first several months of 1851. From January 1 to March 31 Baldwin & Co produced $590,000 worth of coins, Dubosq emitted $150,000 worth, Schultz made $98,000 in $5 pieces, and Moffat & Co., in the 27 days before they stopped coinage to begin work as the United States Assay Office, made $89,000 worth of pieces (probably of the $5 denomination, although no 1851-dated issues are known to exist today). In the first quarter of 1851 the United States Assay Office of Gold produced $530,000 worth of coins.

The desire for additional profit raised its head once again, and many local assayers, bankers, and bullion dealers were not receptive to the rigid standards of Humbert's office, nor did they particularly appreciate the flood of octagonal $50 coins entering the channels of profit. A $50 coin was indisputably worth $50, leaving no "room" for discrediting them or buying them at a discount.

On April 14, 1851, Moffat wrote to Secretary of the Treasury Thomas Corwin, noting that their business was excellent and increasing and that former problems had been largely solved. A brief and somewhat misleading history of the situation was given, including disparaging remarks about competitive private mints:

> We have hereto informed you that the Assay Office encountered the opposition of bankers. Their hostility arose from the belief that its successful operation would conflict with their interests, first, by advancing the price of gold dust; secondly, by compelling them to increase the rates of exchange, and, thirdly, by destroying certain private mints to which they were selling large quantities of gold dust at a profit. In our last we informed you that the first two results had already happened. Since then the third has been accomplished. Those private mints (four in number) encouraged, if not established by bankers, had for some time been flooding the country with their coins.
>
> All this coin was manufactured from the gold of the country without any process of refining; and although of full United States standard weight, yet under mint value because the average fineness of California gold is much below the mint standard. Careful assays of the coin had been made by the United States Assayer, and the fact demonstrated that it was on the average some three percent below its purported value.
>
> A correspondence between the United States Assayer and one of our bankers, showing the result, was published. [An assay done by Augustus Humbert at the request of James King of William, local banker and newspaperman.] The effect was instantaneous and overwhelming; the private mints were at once compelled to suspend operations, and their issues amounting, we have reason to believe, to a million and a half, have since been purchased at a discount of from 5 to 10 percent, and it is not at all likely that another private coin will ever be struck in California.[1]
>
> In the meantime the issues of the Assay Office were popular with the merchants and the people generally. They had the impress of authority, bore the United States stamp, were considered to all intents and purposes a United States coin, and bankers began to find that to discredit it was beyond their power. They have, therefore, made a virtue of necessity, and from enemies have become its friends. They not only now receive it and pay it out as they do other coins of the United States, but they have been the largest depositors of dust at the Assay Office. It will be seen from the report that *all the issues of the Assay Office have been of the denomination of $50*; such too has been the case in the present time. This is owing to the absence of a sufficient supply of legal currency; they are not shipped but go into circulation here, and the chief complaint against the office has been that it has not been authorized to make its issues of still less denominations.
>
> The necessity for such authority is augmented by the sudden withdrawal from circulation of so large amount of private coin.[2] We are waiting with much anxiety such instructions as will enable us to supply this desideratum. Ingots of large denomination will be in demand only when they shall be required for shipment; that they will soon be so required we have every reason to believe. The advance in the price of gold dust as a gradual increase in the rate of exchange convinced us that the day of profit on shipment of dust is nearly passed, and that ere long the miner, the producer, will obtain the full value of his gold, while the merchant will have to rely for his profit on his goods, and the banker on his exchange, and not upon the gold dust.
>
> Moffat & Co.

Baldwin & Co. (1850-1)

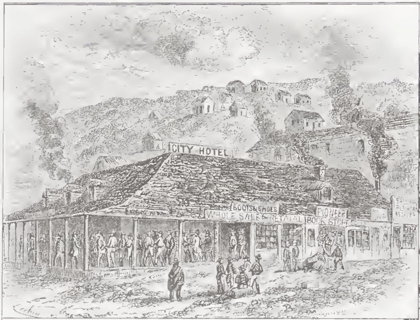
The firm of Baldwin & Co. was founded on March 15, 1850, as the successor to Frederick D. Kohler & Co., when Kohler laid down his private traces to go in harness as the State Assayer. Baldwin's one-story facility was on the south side of Portsmouth Square, the focal spot of the city at the time. The firm's trade was advertised by a large wooden sign erected on the roof near the front.

Kohler had been and continued to be widely respected, and there was nothing to indicate that his successors would not follow suit. However, Baldwin seems to have lacked friends in influential places, namely in the editorial offices of San Francisco newspapers, and soon the firm fell into undeserved disrepute. In particular, Baldwin seems to have been overwhelmed and eventually destroyed by the actions of one of its competitors, the aforementioned Moffat & Co. Today, an *objective analysis* of l'affaire Baldwin would no doubt lead to different conclusions from those current in San Francisco in 1851.

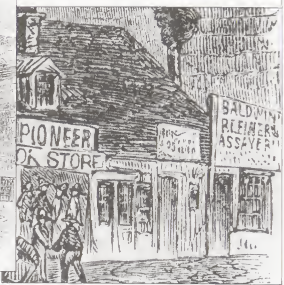
One can imagine that in 1850, Baldwin was very much in the center of local action, with miners holding bags of gold dust coming and going and with gambling halls and saloons running full tilt up and down the street and around

[1] This commentary is written in an amazing "holier than thou" fashion, completely ignoring the fact that Moffat's ingots [illegible] Eckfeldt and DuBois, that on occasion Moffat had refused to redeem its coins, etc. While Moffat & Co. seems to have carried out its business as creditably as anyone, it was not above criticism.

[2] Moffat (via Humbert) has demolished its competition, and may now seek government permission to continue what its former competitors had been doing: minting smaller denomination coins.



Overall view of the City Hotel. Built in 1846, this was the first large hotel in the city. The firm of Baldwin & Co. was located in a small building to its immediate right. (*Annals of San Francisco*)



Detail from the City Hotel engraving, showing the coining firm of Baldwin & Co., Portsmouth Square, circa 1850. Above the one-story office is a sign reading: "BALDWIN / REFINERS / ASSAYERS."

three sides of Portsmouth Square. Just a few steps down the wooden sidewalk from Baldwin & Co. was the city's longest established hotel, although it was only a few years old at the time. The *Annals of San Francisco* described the stopping place:

> The first *hotel* deserving the name was erected in 1846, at the southwest corner of Clay and Kearny Streets. This was the City Hotel. It was a long one-story adobe building, with a verandah running along the entire Kearny Street front. Until after the discovery of gold, this was the only public house of any mark in San Francisco. Soon after that period it was turned into a gambling house and became a famous place of resort for miners and others during the night. It was subsequently divided into many apartments, which were rented for offices, stores, drinking rooms, barrooms, and similar purposes. It was destroyed [illegible]

Hotel rooms, a gambling casino, and offices were within. Along with many other places in San Francisco, the City Hotel offered the "dollar lunch," consisting of bread, a slice of boiled beef, and a pint of coffee.

George C. Baldwin and Thomas S. Holman advertised Baldwin & Co. as assayers, refiners, and coiners who also did "all kinds of engraving." The boast "our coin redeemable on presentation" was made. To encourage their coins to circulate they did as others had done and would do in the future: anyone with coins of their imprint who felt uncertain about them had to but present them to the firm and they would be exchanged at par for other gold coins of the holder's preference. In actuality no private minter could withstand a redemption "run," as federal gold coins remained very scarce.

In 1850 the shortage continued of gold coins of all kinds in general commerce, and for a time the $5 pieces made in quantity by Baldwin that year circulated widely. The coinage of Baldwin was quite extensive and was second only to that of the United States Assay Office (a department of Moffat & Co.), which was making only large-denomination coins. From January 1 to March 31, 1851, it outranked the Assay Office by producing $590,000 worth of coins as compared to efforts totaling $530,000 by the latter firm. Obviously, the Baldwin coins were held in high esteem. The principals at Moffat & Co. became rankled at the success of its competitor.

Then this: On March 21, 1851, transplanted southern gentleman, prominent local banker, and do-gooder James King of William, apparently acting in collusion with Moffat & Co., sent samples of private gold coins to Augustus Humbert, official U.S. assayer in residence at Moffat & Co. Transmitted were the following coins which, according to Humbert, were found to yield these intrinsic values:

> Baldwin & Co. $20, 13 coins, average gold value $19.40, equal to 97.0% of face value.
>
> Baldwin & Co. $10, 10 coins, average gold value $9.74, equal to 97.4% of face value.
>
> Baldwin & Co. $5, 28 coins, average gold value $4.91, equal to 98.2% of face value.

Page 647.

Cf. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, p. 190, and other sources. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. 262 (not quoted here) gives a view of the general district at night, with its saloons, cheap stores, etc.

Baldwin & Co. $10 gold piece, 1851. Baldwin's office was located on Portsmouth Square, the hub of commercial and civic activity at the time. The coins of this firm were very popular in 1850 and early 1851 and were made in large quantities. Soon thereafter, James King of William, a local banker, apparently acting in collusion with Moffat & Co., caused defamatory information about the intrinsic value of Baldwin's coins to be printed in local newspapers, Baldwin fell from grace, and the firm closed its doors. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

> Schultz & Co. $5, 45 coins, average gold value $4.87, equal to 97.4% of face value.
>
> Dubosq $10, 7 coins, average gold value $9.93, equal to 99.3% of face value.
>
> Dubosq $5, 3 coins, average gold value $4.96, equal to 99.2% of face value.

The above findings, published in the *Alta California* and in the *Pacific News*, March 28, 1851, generated many unfair comments about the excess profits the coiners were making, although the pieces in actuality were very close to the intrinsic values of similar denominations made at the Philadelphia Mint.

From that time onward, Baldwin coins were rejected by merchants. The *Alta California* editorially noted that the holders of Baldwin $20 gold pieces would lose 60 cents on each coin, and that the best value was received by owners of Dubosq pieces who would lose only seven cents on each $10 transaction. The result of this editorial discussion was that banking houses immediately refused to handle *any* privately minted coins at face value with the exception of those made by Moffat & Co., the employer of assayer Humbert.

It is believed that upon disclosure of Humbert's findings and the *trial by journalism* the firm ceased coinage immediately. Later, Baldwin's coins changed hands at a 20% discount, a figure significantly less than their metallic value, thus enriching James King of William, Moffat & Co., and others who shared the spoils. Cupidity had triumphed over fairness. Moffat had succeeded in flattening all of its competitors in a brass-knuckled roundhouse punch. Presumably, holders of large quantities of such coins would have taken them to a commercial assayer and refiner, but this was not feasible for someone with just a handful.

On April 9, 1851, the *Pacific News* printed the following commentary:

> THE GOLD COIN SWINDLE. It is perhaps a matter of no especial wonder that the community feels outraged because of the fact that nearly all of the gold coin put in circulation by the private manufacturing establishments is short of weight. A citizen last evening went to Baldwin's establishment, and, presenting two of their own twenty dollar gold pieces, asked their redemption in silver. These were taken, and thirty-eight dollars returned.
>
> This is about as cool and direct a piece of shaving as has come under our eye, touching the short-weight gold coin swindle. Why should the community suffer this to go on longer? Why not refuse every dollar of Baldwin's coin as well as that of every other that is not of full value and redeemed on demand? A bank-bill is worth no more than the bare paper upon which its pretty picture is printed, except from the fact that securities are pledged for its redemption. So also with Baldwin's coin. It is worth no more than the actual value of the gold when compared with the Government standard....

The end of the enterprise was chronicled by the *Pacific News* on April 17, 1851:

> We hear a story, which is pretty well authenticated, that Messrs. Baldwin & Bagley, the manufacturers of "Baldwin's coin," left in the steamer *Panama* on Tuesday for the Atlantic states. This is of course what might have been anticipated as the finale of so magnificent a financial operation as the coinage of one or two millions of circulating medium upon which they have pocketed a profit from 10 to 15 percent, less the expense of manufacturing the stuff.[1] Unable longer to impose their false tokens upon the community, an outraged public will now pocket the loss and congratulate themselves that the swindle has been exposed even this early.
>
> The amount of this coin in circulation is not less than $1,000,000, and is probably nearer to two. But suppose that the smaller sum be correct, the profit to the manufacturers is one hundred thousand dollars. Whose swindling false token establishment is next to be chronicled amongst the "departures for Panama"?

In addition to Humbert's assay, a Baldwin $10 piece of 1850 evaluated at the Philadelphia was found to have an intrinsic value of $9.96, which was not much different from a $10 of the highly acclaimed "pet" firm of Moffat & Co. which was assayed at $9.97. One hundred Baldwin $20 pieces of 1851, assayed at the same institution, were found to have an average value of $19.33. Meanwhile, San Francisco bankers continued to buy Baldwin coins at 80% of face value. For a $20 piece this mean paying $16 for a coin that had on average $19.33 worth of gold, a handsome profit and one that *far exceeded any return that could be made in the normal assaying, refining, and coining business*. Thus, Baldwin & Co. was used as a vehicle for Moffat, James King of William, and others to engage in a new way to swindle the public!

All of this "bad press" resulted in nearly all Baldwin coins being melted. Today, *any* Baldwin coin is a prime rarity.

Dubosq & Co. (1849-1851)

Dubosq & Co. was another private coiner who was found to be annoying by Moffat & Co., and summarily dispatched

[1] Notice the phony calculations implying profits [illegible] that Baldwin's coins were nearly as valuable as those made at the federal mints!

in the "newspaper trial" of 1851. The story began early in 1849:

The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 18, 1849, noted that the *Gray Eagle* had sailed for the land of golden opportunity and gave a passenger list, including Theodore Dubosq, Sr., Theodore Dubosq, Jr., and Henry A. Dubosq.[1] The ship was headed westward via Cape Horn at the tip of South America. Further concerning the venture:

> Mr. Theodore Dubosq, jeweler, North Second Street, we understand takes out with him machinery for melting and coining gold, and stamping it with a private mark, so as to establish a currency which will afford the greater convenience and facility for dealing in the raw material.

At the time, Philadelphia had at least two local manufacturers of coin presses and several accomplished diecutters in the private sector as well as James B. Longacre, chief engraver at the Philadelphia Mint, who sometimes did private commission work.

On the other side of the continent on May 31, 1849, the *Alta California* carried this notice:

> We learn that Mr. Theodore Dubosq, jeweler from Philadelphia, who recently arrived in the *Gray Eagle*, has brought with him the necessary machinery for striking private coins.

Although Dubosq set foot in California at a time in which coins were rare in circulation and other private minters met with success, it is not known whether gold coins were actually struck by him in 1849, although trial pieces in copper of that date are known to have been made. If circulating gold coins were produced, perhaps they were from dies dated 1850.

An 1851 article noted that from January 1st to March 31st of that year Dubosq & Company had produced $150,[illegible] value in gold, this at a time when there was a severe shortage of small denomination coins in circulation. As no specimens bearing the 1851 date are known, they could have been dated 1850 and probably were.

As noted under the Baldwin chronology, banker James King of William [illegible] $10 and three $5 Dubosq coins [illegible] of Dubosq, the United States Assayer Augustus Humbert for evaluation on March 21, 1851. It was subsequently reported that the $5 issue had an intrinsic value of $4.96 and the $10 was worth $9.93. Even though the report was very favorable to Dubosq, the firm, which conducted business in the name of Dubosq & Godwin (although the coins were simply marked "Dubosq & Co."), wrote to say that the pieces, due to the value of silver in them, were worth even more than the high figure reported:

> Having read in the *Alta California* an account of the assays of the different private coins made in San Francisco as assayed by you, in which you have not mentioned the value of silver contained in our coins, and [illegible] too much trouble, we should like you to make public what our coins would yield in Philadelphia.

In reply, Humbert wrote:

> In answer to your letter of this day, stating that I had not mentioned the value of the silver contained in your coin as you call it (but which was stamped "Dubosq & Co."), and also what it will yield in Philadelphia, I beg leave to say in reply to the first, that the coin above mentioned was assayed according to the instructions given to this office by the government, and the same on which all assays are here made. Your coin was found to be 880 thous. fine, and the value of the gold only calculated. You asked what your coin would yield in Philadelphia. I answered that I do not think it worth any more there than in San Francisco.
>
> If you desire to know what it would be worth at the United States Mint, I must refer you to them. Their charge for separating, alloying, toughening, etc., would absorb, I think, nearly, if not all, the silver. I further beg leave to refer you to the following extracts from the Manual of Coins and Bullion, issued by the Assay Office of the United States Mint at Philadelphia, December, 1849: "Silver considered merely as an alloy of gold coins, except that it can be profitably parted out, goes for no more than copper in the same predicament."
>
> A. Humbert, United States Assayer.

Trial by journalism claimed another victim. Soon, Dubosq coins were bought at attractive discounts by Moffat and others and were melted. Today, the only known Dubosq coins are dated 1850 and are of the denominations of $5 and $10. Any Dubosq coin is a great rarity.

Schultz & Co. (1851)

Schultz & Co., a partnership formed in October 1850 by Judge G.W. Schultz[2] and William Thompson Garratt, produced $5 gold coins in 1851. Today, these are great rarities due to the aforementioned "trial" in local newspapers.

In *Builders of a Great City*, published in 1891, the following appears:

> William T. Garratt was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. Judge Schultz and he went into business in October 1850, making all the dies in use in San Francisco for private coinage except those of Moffat, whose $50 slugs will be remembered by all old-timers. Albert Kuner did the engraving for these dies. Besides the actual manufacture of the dies the firm also coined five dollar pieces. Owing to a scarcity of coin in circulation, the firm built the machinery for coining five and ten dollar pieces, and continued until the Legislature passed a law placing private coiners on a banking basis, and on account of this law they discontinued. The firm coined for Burgoyne & Co., and Argenti & Co., brokers. This department of the business had been under the management of Mr. Schultz, and when it was given up he retired. Garratt was originally a mechanic by trade.

In later years William T. Garratt furnished a description of the early activities:

> We made a great many dies for private coining. Albert Kuner, who is still in business here, would do the engraving and I the turning—that is, the machine work on the dies, for which at the time we would get $100 per day per man on that special job.

[1] Spelled *Gray* as well as *Grey* in various accounts.

[2] Spelled "Shultz" in many accounts including by Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-1855*, 1913. The coins were inscribed, in error, "SHULTS."

After that, Schultz took a notion to go into coining for Burgoyne & Co. and Argenti & Co., who were bankers here at the time. They would buy the dust and we would do the coining. We ran for a while, and then Schultz and I separated, he taking the coining establishment and I the foundry, he keeping the room over the foundry for his business. He continued only a short time before the Legislature passed a law prohibiting private coining.

We took gold at $16 an ounce, and put it through the refining process, and then would add 10% copper. That of course would take very little copper, just enough to make the coin hard enough to wear. I think the Legislature prohibited it altogether; I am not exactly clear on that point. Moffat was allowed to go ahead. We continued in the same place after Schultz had quit. We had moved from Clay Street down to Leidesdorff, near Sacramento Street. While we were there we separated. He continued coining until he was shut off by the Legislature; it might have been two months. From that he went up into the mountains and I continued with the business. Judge Schultz was connected with the Gold Mountain Quartz Mining Co.

Three Schultz & Co. $5 pieces assayed at the Philadelphia Mint in 1851 showed an average intrinsic value of $4.94 each. Today, all Schultz & Co. coins are great rarities. Most of them were probably melted after private coiners (except Moffat & Co.) were discredited by the successful conspiracy of James King of William and Moffat.

Dunbar & Co. (1851)

Another San Francisco coiner in the early days was Edward E. Dunbar, who arrived in San Francisco aboard the *S.S. California* on February 28, 1849. He later engaged in several different activities including the Merchants' Exchange and Reading Room on Washington Street, which offered a club-like atmosphere for reading and relaxation. In February 1850 he established Dunbar's California Bank, which proved to be short lived, although he did survive the May 1850 fire. Through his bank and also a separate office he traded in bullion and specie, offering in December 1850 and early January 1851 to redeem at par the numerous gold issues of Baldwin & Co., this being before the Baldwin issues were attacked by James King of William and assayer Humbert.

In 1851 Dunbar commissioned Albert Küner to cut dies for a $5 piece. Probably at least a few thousand were struck, perhaps far more. However, today only a handful are known, this despite the fact that in the same year the Philadelphia Mint assayed a single batch containing 111 pieces![1] Dunbar, too, was a victim of "trial by journalism."

Later 1851 Activities of Moffat and Humbert

The shortage of small denomination coins worsened after Moffat had laid waste to Baldwin, Dubosq, Schultz, and Dunbar. The *Alta California* in July 1851, wrote:

The machinery at the slug mill of Moffat & Co. has at last been repaired, and re-commenced operations yesterday. The monstrous fifty-dollar chunks are becoming a decided nuisance, unless privately taken in large quantities. It is fast becoming one of the greatest favors you could ask of a storekeeper to accommodate you by changing one of them, such is their sluggishness [inadvertent pun?] on the market.

We hear, in fact, of varying stances where various individuals have purchased a pair of gloves or some other small article for which they have no earthly use, merely for the purpose of getting one of these pieces changed. No longer ago than on the occasion of the departure of the last steamer one of them was changed at our counter for a person who was excessively anxious to make a cash purchase of a steamer paper. Price of paper $0.25.

The continuing scarcity of small coins was the subject of an editorial in the *Picayune*, a San Francisco newspaper, on October 21, 1851:

The scarcity of gold and silver coin not only in our city but throughout the state has for some time been a growing evil, and such a one as not only embarrasses our heavy moneyed men but annoys all classes and confuses business of every kind. Since the suspension of small gold coinage by Moffat & Co. this scarcity has been pressing more and more upon the community, as the great proportion of our current coin of the $5 and $10 denominations came from their mint. This currency, together with that afforded by Mexican and various South American doubloons, has been of almost inestimable value in the conducting of business. Immense quantities of these coins have been melted up into ingots or shipped to foreign countries, which has resulted in a complete derangement of the currency of this state and the substitution of another circulating medium which, as it has happened, is not at all adapted to the ordinary wants of the community.

Until within a few months it was not generally supposed that the issue of ingots by the United States Assay Office would have the effect of driving the smaller kinds of gold coins from circulation, except perhaps the fraudulent and uncurrent issues of some of the private mints; and this last was a result which was contemplated by all with none other than feelings of satisfaction. Of Moffat's coins there was already in circulation an amount supposed to be ample for years, as none of it would find its way out of the state. But a great share of it has gone into the Assay Office and has reappeared in the shape of fifty dollar ingots. Many of the doubloons have taken a similar course, though most of them have been shipped away, the increased price of gold dust having destroyed in a great measure the opportunity for the profitable investment here. The amount of American gold in circulation has always been very limited; for a considerable time past its exportation has exceeded its influx, owing to the demand by our increasing emigration and the stringent condition of the eastern money market. If the present rate of drainage be continued it will very soon exhaust our supply of national gold currency.

Of silver coin also the supply is too small to meet the wants of the community. This, to be sure, partially arises from the fact that the gold is being absorbed or shipped away as we have just stated. But even though there were the same amount of silver coin in the state now than there was a year since, it would not be found sufficient to supply the vacuum in the convenient currency created by the withdrawal of the smaller gold coin. The great bulk of our silver currency has been composed of Mexican and Peruvian silver dollars, with a considerable sprinkling of [French] five franc pieces. For smaller trade

[1] Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Du Bois, *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins, Counterfeit Coins and Bullion With Mint Values*, 1851, p. 9: "Five dollar piece of Dunbar & Co., an imitation of United States coin. A lot of 111 pieces averages 131 grains weight, 885 fineness, value $4.98."

> we have had a most varied assortment of fractional silver, comprising representations of the currency of well nigh every nation in the world. Mexican dollars have always stood first in favor because of their well known purity of standards, their convenience for all, and their necessity for some of our Pacific trade. Therefore we find that this coin has for a long time commanded two percent premium for the China and East India trade. The supply at the same time has continued to diminish. Like the doubloon, they can now be more profitably invested elsewhere. Instead of being shipped here for the purchase of gold dust they are sent direct to the Atlantic states and Europe, where there exists a pressing demand, and they at present command high rates of premium.[1]
>
> This monthly inconvenience, now in fact almost amounting to a currency crisis, will not probably continue much longer. Only the prospect of speedy relief, and the fact of the recent increase in the value of gold dust has hindered the re-commencement of private coinage, notwithstanding the existence of the statute prohibiting the same, and the knowledge of the evils certain in the end to result from it. But we entertain no doubt that relief of a satisfactory and durable nature will soon be afforded. Several months since, we believe, a request was forwarded to the Treasury Department by the United States Assay Office in this city asking for authority to issue gold coins of all the federal denominations. It is probable that such power will be granted him, and that so far as gold currency is concerned a full supply of the desired denominations will be introduced. Within another year we anticipate seeing a regularly organized United States Mint in operation here, receiving our twin staples, gold and silver, and issuing coins sufficient not only to supply our own State, but to rule the currency and trade of the Pacific.

By the end of 1851, merchants and bankers often charged a 4% commission to change a $50 coin into $5s and $10s, this not being much of an improvement from the time when coins of private minters sold for discounts.

Wass, Molitor & Co. (1852-1855)

After the wholesale slaughter of its competitors in spring 1851, Moffat & Co. had the private coining business to itself, with no competition in sight. However, the spirit of enterprise had not died, and in January 1852 a new private firm, Wass, Molitor & Co., began striking smaller coins of $5 and $10 value. Finding a ready utility in the channels of commerce, these were generally received at a *premium* of 2% to 3% over the United States Assay Office issues of larger denominations. The firm continued to do business through 1855, in the latter year making $10 and $20 denominations, but most important and memorable, producing many thousands of large, handsome round-shaped $50 slugs. Throughout the several years of its operation, Wass, Molitor & Co. was held in high regard by the San Francisco business community.

Moffat's Final Years (1852-1853)

In January 1852—the same month that competitor Wass, Molitor & Co. was founded—Moffat & Co. began to make $10 pieces, signaling that it was not going to sit idly and let the new upstart coiner take care of the smaller denomination gold coin shortage.[2] On February 12, 1852, Moffat advertised that it had received Treasury Department permission for Moffat's separate department, the United States Assay Office, to make $10 and $20 coins, the production of which would be commenced immediately. Such coins were to be marked "884" indicating a fineness of 884/1000 purity. At the time it was considered difficult to refine typical California gold metal deposits to the federal standard of 900, although this standard was achieved by November 1852. Meanwhile, coins were issued of 884 and 887 fineness.

Most Moffat coinage from early 1852 onward was on behalf of the United States Assay Office, later imprinted on coins as the United States Assay Office *of Gold.* However, in July 1853 a new Liberty Head $20 bearing the name of Moffat & Co. appeared. The design, except for the inscriptions, was quite similar to that of the current United States double eagle being struck at Philadelphia. Notice concerning the new issue appeared in the *Alta California,* July 26:

> Moffat's & Co.'s Assay Office. The new double eagles lately issued by this firm are attracting much admiration for their beautiful workmanship. The coin is a facsimile of that struck by the United States Mint, with the head instead of bearing the motto LIBERTY has MOFFAT & CO. As regards design and finish, the piece is scarcely inferior to the issues of the Mint and reflects great credit upon Messrs. Moffat & Co.'s taste, enterprise, and artistical skill.

The reason for issuing a distinctive Moffat & Co. double eagle at the same time coins of identical denomination were being produced by the United States Assay Office of Gold, under the same management, is enigmatic.[3] The total production of the United States Assay Office of Gold during the years of its operation is not known. It was estimated during the first quarter of 1851 that $600,000 worth of coins of the $50 denomination were made.

Late in the year 1853, the partnership of Curtis, Perry & Ward sold its mint and related facilities to the United States government for use as the San Francisco Mint.

By autumn 1853, gold coins in circulation in San Francisco consisted of a rich mixture of gold pieces by the more highly esteemed issuers including Moffat, the U.S. Assay Office of Gold, and Wass, Molitor & Co., plus a few stray discredited pieces from earlier times. Federal gold coins remained scarce. Silver coins were mainly from Mexico, Central America, and South America.

California had a monopoly on the world's gold, but no federal mint of its own.

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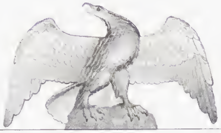
[1] As noted in Chapter 3, the great influx of California gold into financial markets made silver seem "rare" by comparison. In the East large numbers of federal silver coins were melted down, as the rise in price of silver bullion on international markets had made coins worth more than their face value.

[2] *Prices Current,* January 14, 1852, stated that "Messrs. Moffat & Co., and Wass, Molitor & Co. have again commenced to issue small coins."

[3] It is remarkable that in 1854 the reverse die of the 1853 Moffat $20 issue was used by private coiner Kellogg & Co. to strike $20 pieces.

Chapter Six



The San Francisco Mint

Introduction

The San Francisco Mint plays a central role in the annals of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* as most of the gold treasure coins recovered from ship's wreck bear the distinctive "S" mintmark on the reverse. Included are coins of amazing quality, mostly dated 1864 and 1865, which completely restructure the traditional concept of availability. Similarly, most coins from the wreck of the *S.S. Central America*, sunk in 1857, bear "S" mintmarks from that era.

Without the discovery of coins from the wrecks of these two sidewheel steamers the roster of high-grade gold coins known to exist from the 1854-1865 era would be dramatically different. Indeed, absent these two fortuitous finds, even the most well-moneyed, most advanced collector might never own a choice example of certain gold coin varieties. Generations of numismatists have been born and have died without knowing what we do now. How fortunate collectors of the present era are to be on the scene!

This chapter is written to appeal to the historian, treasure aficionado, and collector who would like to learn about the setting in which these coins were made, the hardships under which they were produced, the reasons why certain coins were made in certain quantities, and the elements affecting their numismatic rarity. As unbelievable as it may seem, there are coins of which *thousands* were minted, but of which not a *single* coin is known today in as-new (Mint State) condition!

The study begins with the first deposits of Gold Rush metal at the Philadelphia Mint in 1848, continues to the planning for the San Francisco Mint in 1853 and its opening in 1854, and ends with 1865, the last year in the life of the *Brother Jonathan*. In addition, for readers who may not be numismatists, basic information is given concerning coin grading, rarity, and determination of value.

California Gold Shipped to the Mints (1848-1853)

The *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint at Philadelphia* for 1848, sent to President James K. Polk on January 16, 1849, included an early mention of metal from the Gold Rush:

> In [the table] that gives the amounts of deposits[1] of gold from mines in the United States, two new columns are opened, with deposits received from New Mexico and California since their annexation. The deposits received are as yet small, but there is every reason to believe that the gold to be obtained from these sources will be of great amount.

The table noted that in 1848 $682 in gold had been received at the Philadelphia Mint from New Mexico and $41,177 from California. This was the beginning of a trend that for a long time saw increasing shipments of metal from the new discoveries.

Given below are estimated figures for the total production of gold metal (including gold *not* shipped to the mints) in California from 1848 onward. Such numbers are subject to opinion and interpretation. Estimates are in dollars with gold valued at $20.67 per ounce (the official Mint figure for *pure* gold). Figures for 1848-1853 are given below; later figures are given by year under headings for San Francisco Mint operations:[2]

[1] In Treasury reports of the mid-[illegible] this word was often spelled as *deposites*, modernized in the [illegible].

[2] The source for the estimated [illegible] production of gold [illegible] prepared by Louis A. Garnett [illegible] San Francisco [illegible] Herbert M. Bergen, "California Gold and the Civil War," *The Numismatist*, February 1962. This seems to be [illegible] studied. The actual price of gold [illegible] depending upon the purchaser, the location at which it was bought [illegible]. In 1859 the San Francisco Mint was paying $18.60 per ounce for fine gold [illegible], while at the Philadelphia Mint and the New York City Assay Office the value [illegible]

Cityscape of San Francisco in the bay in 1854, the year that the Mint opened for business. The city was in a rapid growth period, having rebuilt from the ashes of several fires earlier in the decade. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

1848: Total California gold metal production: $245,301; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $44,177.
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $1,124.[1]

1849: Total California gold metal production: $10,151,360; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $5,481,439.
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $669,921

1850: Total California gold metal production: $41,273,106; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $31,667,505.
- Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $30,025.[2]
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $4,575,567

1851: Total California gold metal production: $75,938,232; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $46,939,367.
- Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $15,111. This marked the first time that the Charlotte Mint used California gold. The practice continued through 1856, although amounts were small in comparison to metal obtained from the Mint's own region: North Carolina in particular and South Carolina.[3]
- Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $214,071. This constituted 56% of the metal used at the Dahlonega Mint this year. This is the first of four consecutive years in which California gold was the main source of supply for this facility. During this four-year span most of the California metal was used to strike $5 gold coins, the largest denomination made at Dahlonega.
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $8,719,682. This represents the largest amount of California gold sent to New Orleans during a given year, the figure far exceeding the runner-up $4,575,567 for 1850. Most of the metal was coined into double eagles, the most convenient denomination for overseas banking and commerce.

1852: Total California gold metal production: $81,294,700 (the highest total for any year[4]); of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $49,663,623.
- Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $28,362. This represented the largest use by Charlotte of California gold during any year. At the time its main sources continued to be North Carolina (which in 1852 provided $337,604 worth of gold) and South Carolina ($64,934). This also marks the year in which the private coinage of the Bechtler family (Christopher Bechtler and, later, August Bechtler), which had begun in 1830, came to its end.
- Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $324,931. This constituted 68% of the metal used at the Dahlonega Mint this year.
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $3,777,784.

1853: Total California gold metal production: $67,613,487; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

- Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $52,732,227. This represents the greatest amount of gold sent from California to that facility during any year.

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ounce of *absolutely pure* gold was $20.67. However, gold could not be refined to this purity. Other figures, seemingly less accurate, but more widely quoted in popular texts, include these numbers used by Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, p. 423; and L. Stebbins, *Progress of the United States*, 1870, p. 73; the figures were calculated at $20 per ounce: 1848 $10,000,000, 1849 $40,000,000, 1850 $50,000,000, 1851 $60,000,000, 1852 $60,000,000, 1853 $65,000,000, 1854 $60,000,000, 1855 $55,000,000, 1856 $56,000,000, 1857 $55,000,000, 1858 $50,000,000, 1859 $50,000,000, 1860 $45,000,000, 1861 $40,000,000, 1862 $34,700,000, 1863 $30,000,000, 1864 $26,000,000, and 1865 $28,500,000. Figures for California gold used at the various mints are precise (not estimates) and are from various issues of the *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*.

[1] The New Orleans Mint began coinage operations in 1838, continued until 1861, then operated again from 1879 to 1909. Coins struck there bear an "O" mintmark.

[2] The Dahlonega Mint began coinage operations in 1838 and continued until 1861. Coins struck there bear a "D" mintmark. Originally, the mint had been established to coin metal from gold strikes in its own region.

[3] The Charlotte Mint began coinage operations in 1838 and continued until 1861. Coins struck there bear a "C" mintmark. The facility was originally established to coin metal from finds in the region. Although no coins were struck there beyond 1861, after the Civil War the facility operated until June 30, 1913, as a branch Assay Office. Today the original building still stands, but in a different location, as the Mint Museum, which displays art and other items.

[4] However, Bancroft and Stebbins, using different figures, assign 1853 as the record year.

- Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $15,465.
- Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $359,122. This constituted 79% of the metal used at the Dahlonega Mint this year.
- New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $2,006,673.

Prelude to the San Francisco Mint

By early 1854 the coinage situation in San Francisco was still in a state of flux. While the United States Assay Office of Gold had provided a supply of $10 and $20 coins ending in 1853, and some of the octagonal $50 pieces of 1851-1852 were still in circulation, there was no official coinage of the smaller denominations that were most useful in commerce. Wass, Molitor & Co., which had struck many $5 and $10 coins in 1852, seems to have produced no coins dated 1853 or 1854.

Coins in general circulation in California consisted of the aforementioned gold issues plus some others dating back to 1849 (such as the highly regarded Moffat & Co. coins), as well as some federal gold coins that had found their way from the East, and a large quantity of Spanish-American reales, escudos, and their various multiples and divisions. Copper coins continued to be unknown.

A Mint Proposed

From 1848 onward there were many calls for the establishment of a federal mint in San Francisco. At the time the nearest government coinage facility was in New Orleans, to which city round-trip travel involved more than a month. The Philadelphia Mint was even more remote from the gold discoveries. Thus, it was not practical for anyone holding gold dust or nuggets in California to obtain freshly minted federal coins in exchange for them.

In the early days of the Gold Rush, on August 17, 1848, Col. Richard B. Mason, Jr., acting governor of California, wrote, in part, to his superiors in Washington, D.C.:[1]

> I would recommend that a mint be established at some eligible point on the bay of San Francisco, and that machinery, and all the apparatus and workmen, be sent by sea. These workmen must be found by high wages, and even bonds, to secure their faithful services; else the whole plan may be frustrated by their going to the mines as soon as they arrive in California. If this course be not adopted, gold to the amount of many millions of dollars will pass yearly to other countries to enrich their merchants and capitalists.

Legislators in far-off Washington generally ignored the needs of California. Few congressmen or senators had ever been there or knew much about it. The needs of citizens and newcomers to that fast-developing territory were not viewed as being of high priority. Because of this, Californians were left to their own devices. Assayers, bankers, and entrepreneurs in San Francisco developed various substitutes for federal coins, including gold bars and privately minted coins, while the use of Spanish-American coins continued to increase as the population expanded.

In 1850 Col. John C. Frémont was elected to the United States Senate from California, this being the first year of statehood. He traveled to Philadelphia and discussed with Mint Director Robert Maskell Patterson the need for a western mint.[2] However, it was Patterson's view that the United States already had too many mints, perhaps a stance taken in relation to the relatively high expenses of maintaining facilities in Charlotte and Dahlonega, mints which coined only small amounts in comparison to New Orleans and Philadelphia.

The continuing paucity of federal coins in circulation in San Francisco in 1850, and encouragement from California's congressional delegation, prompted President Millard Fillmore to include the following in his message to Congress on December 2:

> There being no Mint in California, I am informed that the laborers in the mines are compelled to dispose of their gold dust at a large discount. This appears to me to be a heavy and unjust tax upon the labor of those employed in extracting this precious metal, and I doubt not you will be disposed to, at the earliest moment possible, relieve them from it by the establishment of a Mint. In the meantime, as an Assayer's office is established there, I would respectfully submit for your consideration the propriety of authorizing gold bullion, which had been assayed and stamped, to be received in payment of Government dues.

Although Fillmore and his predecessor James Knox Polk called for a mint in California, they did not make the laws. Congress had the responsibility, and Congress continued to be apathetic.

The government's semiofficial entry into West Coast coinage, the office of United States Assayer of Gold, which had set up operations under the direction of Augustus Humbert in January 1851, was mostly useful in the preparation of large $50 gold slugs, favorites with the export trade and for large transactions, but of little use in everyday life. Its successor in name, the United States Assay Office of Gold, was in fact a government minting facility under contract to Moffat & Co., but its coins were not accorded legal tender status. Was it a *provisional* mint? Or was it in the private sector? No one seemed to know for sure, and at one time the government Custom House refused its coins. In any event, no denominations below $10 were ever minted there, and in 1851 and 1852 the large octagonal $50 pieces had been the primary output.

[1] Letter addressed to General R. Jones, adjutant general U.S.A., in Washington, D.C. Letter text reproduced in *The Elephant As They Saw It*, pp. 50-57; this was also printed as House Executive Document 17, pp. 528 ff., for the 31st Congress, 1st Session. This may have been the first formal suggestion for a federal mint in the state. The letter includes the names of 14 parties from whom gold specimens were obtained for transmission to Washington, among them being Capt. J.A. Sutter. One sample was from the placer deposit found near Los Angeles circa 1841-1842.

[2] R.W. Julian, "The Original S Mint"

What was needed in California was an official mint, one that would strike all of the denominations in popular use in commerce there, consisting of silver coins from 25 upward and gold from $1 upward, to fill the needs of citizens and merchants alike, from schoolchildren to large-volume exporters.

Ironically, while California was in desperate need of a federal mint to coin native gold to provide coins for local circulation, at distant Philadelphia the Mint was unprepared for the golden influx, and new equipment which better might have gone to San Francisco was installed at Philadelphia instead. This seemingly illogical scenario is given in the words of the director of the Mint:[1]

> From about the middle of 1849 to nearly the close of the first quarter of 1851, the Mint was subjected to a pressure of deposits which it was not able to meet. The gold from California is unfit for manufacture into standard coins of the United States, without the previous operation of separating the excess of silver which it contains over and above the quantity allowable as alloy.
>
> Prior to our receipts from California, but very little of such separable bullion was received, and the refining department was organized on a very small, though sufficient scale. To meet the new demand created by the unprecedented quantities of such bullion brought from California required new construction, extensive enlargements, a new arrangement of space within the Mint, and new machinery so perfect and complete which, at the same time that the pressure upon the Mint was constant and increasing, was a work of much labor, anxiety and delay. In such circumstances the means of promptly paying the deposits were insufficient. The average delay in the cashing of deposits in the year 1850 was 25 days; in January of 1851 there was a delay of 47 days.

Such comments reflect that gold, so precious to the developing American West, was considered a nuisance by the Philadelphia Mint. Indeed, the entire West Coast situation seemed to be a [illegible] to Director George N. Eckert as it had been for his predecessor, Robert Maskell Patterson.

However, hope springs eternal in the distant land of gold. Responding to ever increasing pressure from its cash-starved constituency, on April 9, 1852, the Legislature of California passed this joint resolution:[2]

> *Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of California*, that our senators in Congress be, and they are hereby, instructed, and our representatives requested, to use their utmost endeavors to procure the establishment of a branch mint of the United States in this state at the earliest possible moment.

Such a resolution was hardly new, as discussions on the subject had been virtually continuous in the state Legislature ever since it was formed.

Getting Ready for the Mint (1853)

After many false starts and dashed hopes, on July 3, 1852, Congress finally passed an act for the establishment of a branch mint in San Francisco. Proposals for the erection of a building were advertised, but no contract was awarded. On March 3, 1853, the deadline for receipt of proposals was extended. Finally, the construction contract was given to a Mr. Butler for $239,000. This franchise was subsequently acquired by Curtis, Perry & Ward, who negotiated a new contract with the secretary of the Treasury. The partnership undertook to provide both its present building and the machinery on hand, transferring equipment used earlier to fulfill its work as the United States Assay Office of Gold and its parallel business, Moffat & Co.

Joseph R. Curtis supervised building renovations while Philo H. Perry tended to the arrangements for refurbishing and upgrading the machinery. The San Francisco Mint, as finished, consisted of a modest structure 60 feet square and three stories high. During the renovations, the building was extended 20 feet on the western side. Earlier, the footprint had measured just 60 by 40 feet. The exterior was covered with cement. It seems that Curtis, Perry & Ward benefited, but whether the government did is another question.

The "new" San Francisco Mint compared poorly to the other federal facilities in use elsewhere. The building was small, cramped, and poorly ventilated. This *tiny* mint was smaller than even the branch mints at Charlotte and Dahlonega, even though those distant mints struck relatively few coins and none of any denomination over $5. The New Orleans Mint was immensely larger and stretched across a full city block. Some comments arose concerning the propriety of the arrangement, the implementation of which had been facilitated by Sen. William M. Gwin. The senator was said to have been on the "take" from Moffat, although specific evidence was never found.[3]

The Director of the Mint, George N. Eckert, whose office was in distant Philadelphia, had taken the post in July 1851 and, as events developed, served until April 1853. The director was in charge of all mints including most of the arrangements for the new San Francisco branch. In April 1853 Eckert was succeeded by Thomas M. Pettit, who served only a few weeks before dying in office (explaining why so little is heard of Pettit in numismatic chronicles).

In June 1853 Pettit was replaced by James Ross Snowden,

[1] George N. Eckert, director, reply to Senate interrogatories, dated January 17, 1853, 32nd Congress, 2nd Session, Senate, Ex. Doc. No. 21

[2] 32nd Congress, 1st Session, Miscellaneous No. 60.

[3] Lately Thomas, *Between Two Empires*, 1969, p. 94, relates that Moffat delayed the implementation of the new San Francisco Mint so that they could charge miners 2% for assaying their gold, whereas the normal charge was 1%. "This gouge, it was said, was costing the miners $21,000,000 in extra fees [an improbable sum—QDB], and Moffat, it was further charged, was splitting its profits with Senator Gwin. Hence the delay in constructing the mint. Proof of Gwin's improper involvement was not offered."

who held the directorship until 1861. Snowden was quite interested in numismatics, and later his name appeared on the title page of two highly important books on the subject, *A Description of Ancient and Modern Coins in the Cabinet of the Mint of the United States*, 1860,[1] and *A Description of the Medals of Washington*, 1861. The latter was the first book-length treatment of such medals, these being the most active, most desired series in the numismatic market at the time. Numismatists owe a debt to Snowden for many accomplishments, including the first widespread sale of Proof coins to the public (1858),[2] the creation of the Flying Eagle and Indian cents and attendant patterns, and, perhaps not in the "debt" category, the large-scale production of restrikes of earlier-dated rarities. Snowden's entrepreneurial outlook would make the Mint the largest "coin dealer" in America at the end of the decade.

The Philadelphia Mint was central to the activities of the proposed San Francisco branch, for at Philadelphia the various coining processes were developed and all coinage dies were made. The dies intended for San Francisco were to be of standard federal designs, but with an "S" mintmark added to the reverse to signify the mint of origin. At the time the mintmarks C (Charlotte), D (Dahlonega), and O (New Orleans) were being used by other mints, while coins made at Philadelphia bore no special letter.

In 1853 six pairs of dies bearing this date for federal Liberty Head design $5 half eagles and five pairs of dies for federal $10 eagles were shipped to Augustus Humbert at the U.S. Assay Office of Gold in San Francisco. However, no 1853-S coinage is known to have materialized. The U.S. Assay Office of Gold was primarily busy making $20 coins with designs featuring a perched eagle on the obverse and engine-turned lines and an inscription on the reverse.

The *Annual Report* for 1853, signed by Director Snowden, contained much news including information suggesting that so much California gold was arriving at the Philadelphia Mint that some of the metal was cast into bars:

> The coinage, including gold bars, executed at the Philadelphia Mint in 1853, has amounted to $60,111,249.72; of which $36,355,621 were in gold coins, $15,838,997.94 were in refined gold bars. The amount of gold of domestic production deposited at the Mint and its branches during the last year was $55,622,051, of which sum $55,113,487 was from California, and the balance from the Atlantic states, except a few deposits from Oregon of the value of $13,535. These were the first deposits from that territory, and are characterized by having an appreciable percentage of platinum sand. The silver parted from the gold from California amounted to the sum of $407,122; in addition to which there was received other silver of domestic production to the value of $10,146.[4] At the principal Mint [Philadelphia] several deposits of Australian gold have been made during the past year, amounting to $195,000.
>
> It might be interesting to state that one million dollars weighs, in gold, 3,685 5/7 pounds avoirdupois, and in silver 54,857 pounds.[6]

The branch mint at San Francisco, California, it is expected, will be ready to receive deposits and commence

The New York Assay Office was housed in the building that had been the home of the Bank of the United States and was immediately to the right of the U.S. Sub-Treasury (the Greek Revival structure at the center of the image). The Assay Office was torn down in 1919 and 1920, and the facade was removed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it became the front of the American Wing, opened in 1924. (Print from the 1850s used as the frontispiece of *A Mint in New York*, 1930)

operations about the 1st of March next [March 1, 1854]. In consequence of a change in the grade of the street on which the building is being erected, more time will be consumed in its completion than was anticipated. The machinery, which was constructed in Philadelphia, arrived there in good condition on the 12th of December last; but a portion of the fixtures and apparatus had not arrived on the 30th of December, the date of my last advices, the vessel containing them having then been out 145 days [via Cape Horn]. These circumstances will probably delay the commencement of coining operations until the time above stated. The coins to be issued by this branch of the mint will be designated by the letter S on the reverse.

The building which is designed for the Assay Office at New York will be erected, and completed in April next. The machinery, apparatus, and implements will be ready for use as soon as the building is prepared to receive them. We may, therefore, expect operations to commence on the last of April or in the early part of May next.

[1] Primarily researched and written by William E. Dubois and [illegible], the latter being the [illegible] of the Mint Cabinet at the [illegible] about him has [illegible] in numismatic literature.
[2] Although Proof coins had been [illegible] collectors, in 1858 Snowden had Proof [illegible] and offered for sale [illegible] coins (The Flying Eagle [illegible] per piece basis.
[3] Platinum was considered to [illegible] that of gold.
[4] Reflective of the importance of [illegible] in popular accounts of the Gold Rush.
[5] Australia was having its own Gold Rush. [illegible] production was about [illegible]
[6] These calculations [illegible] of $1.14 per ounce.

Poignantly, the New York City Assay Office[1] was set up in a much larger and finer structure than the San Francisco facility, although no minting was contemplated to occur there. The New York building was purchased in 1853 for $530,000, without equipment. The edifice had been home to the New York City branch of the late but hardly lamented Bank of the United States and was adjacent to the New York Sub-Treasury. When completed, the New York Assay Office would remove much of the *nuisance* of gold refining presently *endured* at the Philadelphia Mint.

Director Snowden further related that at the Philadelphia Mint in 1853 some 4,576 fine (nearly pure) bars of gold amounting in value to $15,835,998 had been made, representing an average value of $3,461 each and an average weight of 14.4 pounds! Obviously, bars in this weight range or anything close to it must have been intended only for storage for later coinage use or shipment to a commercial buyer; they could not have had any utility in everyday trade. At the time London was a major market for and the price determination point of the values of gold and silver.

By the end of 1853 the total amount of California gold deposited at the Philadelphia Mint since 1849 had amounted to $186,528,338 and that at the New Orleans Mint, $19,800,751. The branch mints at Charlotte and Dahlonega had each received significant amounts of California gold, cumulatively totaling $58,938 for the former and an impressive $928,150 for the latter.

It is a curious and seemingly unlikely footnote in American coinage history that in 1853 and several other years, far more Dahlonega Mint coins were made of California gold than from metal from the mint's own state of Georgia! The figures for deposits at Dahlonega for 1853:[2]

California gold: $359,1[illegible]

Georgia gold: $56,984

South Carolina gold: $33,[illegible]

North Carolina gold: $2,085

Total: $452,290

From 1848, the year of the James Marshall's discovery in the American River of the world's most historically important flake of gold, until 1854, the year when the San Francisco Mint was opened, deposits of California gold at the various other mints are as follows, together with total estimated gold production in the state:[3]

1848: Estimated production of gold in California: $245,301. • Deposited in the various mints: $45,301. • Gold not deposited in mints: $200,000.

1849: Estimated production of gold in California: $10,151,360. • Deposited in the various mints: $6,151,360. • Gold not deposited in mints: $4,000,000.

1850: Estimated production of gold in California: $41,273,106. • Deposited in the various mints: $36,273,106. • Gold not deposited in mints: $5,000,000.

1851: Estimated production of gold in California: $75,938,232. • Deposited in the various mints: $55,938,232. • Gold not deposited in mints: $20,000,000.

1852: Estimated production of gold in California: $81,294,700. • Deposited in the various mints: $53,452,567. • Gold not deposited in mints: $27,842,133.

1853: Estimated production of gold in California: $67,613,487. • Deposited in the various mints: $55,113,487. • Gold not deposited in mints: $12,500,000.

The Custom House in San Francisco kept records concerning California gold production and exports. In 1853 it accepted gold coins in payment of customs duties, but did not honor the earlier semi-official issues of the United States Assay Office of Gold.

As reported by the Custom House, the export of gold from San Francisco, totaling $54,906,956.74 during calendar year 1853, was shipped to the following locations:[4]

New York City: $47,914,448.[5]

London: $4,795,662.

China: $926,134.

Valparaiso, Chile: $445,778.

New Orleans: $390,781.

Sandwich Islands (Hawaii): $191,000.

[1] Given as New York City Assay Office in the present text. Government documents and designations varied and included Assay Office at (or *in*) New York (or New York City), the same but prefaced by U.S. or United States, etc. Bauman L. Belden, *A Mint in New York*, 1930, contains much information about the Assay Office.

[2] Such figures, not widely discussed in numismatic literature including specialized studies of gold coins, indicate that any analysis of trace elements in various Dahlonega or other gold coins must also consider the origin of the metal deposits. It is seen that a typical Dahlonega gold coin of 1853 is more likely to contain trace elements of California gold than Georgia gold.

[3] *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 486 (adapted). Additional calculations by Robert Shippee, letter, January 26, 1999, who noted that the 1852 figure for "gold not deposited" differs from other figures as it is not approximate or rounded off.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 486-487. It is highly likely that large additional amounts were exported without being recorded at the Custom House.

[5] Some of this amount was intended for later transshipment to London and other foreign cities.

Mint Director James Ross Snowden expressed many opinions in his 1853 report, including this suggestion to help alleviate gold from becoming too plentiful, lest its value fall:

> It is now due to us as the great gold-producing nation that our [paper] currency should be purged from all bank notes below the denominations of the double eagle. Such a remedy, by increasing the uses of gold, would doubtless mitigate any inconvenience arising from the large production of that metal, and aid us in arriving at the just conclusion that all fears of excessive returns from California and Australia may be put to rest.

At the time the federal government was not issuing paper money, but private banks in the East and Midwest were putting it out by the hundreds of millions of dollars. Snowden did not take into consideration the great advantage that banks had in the issuance of such notes: often a bank reserve of $10,000 in coins would permit paper notes to circulate to the extent of $50,000 to $100,000. No such inflation would be possible if gold coins were substituted for paper. Paper notes could be printed virtually at will, but gold coins required nearly full value of gold metal.

On June 30, 1853, Lewis Aiken Birdsall was named superintendent of the San Francisco Mint-to-be, remaining in the post until June 30, 1855.[1] John Hewston, Jr., took the post of assayer,[2] John M. Eckfeldt was appointed as the chief coiner,[3] and Agostin Haraszthy was named as the chief assayer.[4] The latter had come to America from Hungary and was a man of considerable intelligence, refinement, and financial means as well as an expert in agriculture and viticulture. Jacob R. Snyder, treasurer, was to supervise the accounting and financial aspects of the institution. Duties of the officers and staff included clerking, assaying, refining, and the various aspects of coinage.

On December 12, 1853, the *Alta California* reported that the clipper ship *Trade Wind* had arrived in port from Philadelphia with machinery for the new mint, probably including a new press for double eagles that had been ordered recently from Morgan & Orr in Philadelphia for $4,700.

$20 gold coin made by the private firm of Kellogg & Co., 1854. Although the San Francisco Mint opened for business this year, in the early months there was a severe coin shortage, and Kellogg stepped in to seize the opportunity. Similar coins were also made in 1855. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr., Collection)

In the interval between the closing of Curtis, Perry & Ward (Moffat & Co.) in 1853 and the anticipated opening of the new branch mint in April 1854, vast amounts of gold were coming into the cities, but no minting facilities were in operation. A severe shortage of the state's favorite coin, the $20 double eagle, developed in the channels of commerce.

In February 1854 Kellogg & Richter, trading as Kellogg & Co., began minting $20 gold coins with a Liberty head similar to the federal issue, but with different lettering. Their entry was welcomed with enthusiasm and, in fact, was in response to a petition dated January 14, 1854, signed by leading bankers of San Francisco and Sacramento.[5] Such firms as Page, Bacon & Co.; Burgoyne & Co.; James King of William; Adams & Co.; Wells, Fargo & Co.; Lucas, Turner & Co., among others, offered to receive Kellogg's coins at par if they could be made.

The first bright, lustrous Kellogg double eagles were produced on February 9, 1854. Kellogg continued coining through the rest of 1854 and into 1855. In the latter year, Augustus Humbert, formerly of Curtis, Perry & Ward and the U.S. Assay Office of Gold, became a partner, and the firm became known as Kellogg & Humbert, although coins continued to bear inscriptions of Kellogg & Co.

The scene was now set for the actual operation of the federal San Francisco Mint.

Numismatics Relating to 1854-1865

The following numismatic study of San Francisco coinage 1854-1865 is arranged in order first by year and then by denominations within the year. A setting is thus provided whereby the 5¢ silver (half dime), 10¢ silver (dime), 25¢ silver (quarter dollar), 50¢ silver (half dollar), solo $1 silver (1859 dollar), and the gold denominations of $1, $2.50 (quar-

[1] Birdsall, a native of New York state, came to California as a Forty Niner. He was the son-in-law of U.S. Congressman Milton S. Latham (who was elected governor of California in 1859 and to the U.S. Senate in 1860).

[2] Hewston was an experienced man having worked the previous decade at the Philadelphia Mint. Following his tenure at the San Francisco Mint, Hewston became a private assayer in San Francisco as a partner with John Glover Kellogg (of Kellogg & Co. private coiner renown) in the firm of Kellogg, Hewston & Co.

[3] Eckfeldt was the grandson of Adam Eckfeldt, the second person to hold the chief coiner post at the Philadelphia Mint. Over a long span of years many Eckfeldt family members attained various positions at the Mint, usually in a technical capacity.

[4] First name sometimes anglicized as August, Augustin, etc.

[5] G.F. Richter was listed among passengers departing San Francisco on the S.S. *J.L. Stephens* on April 15, 1854, for Panama. In May he arrived in New York City aboard the S.S. *George Law* (later known as the S.S. *Central America*). In the *Alta California*, June 4, 1854, Hewston and Kellogg began advertising their business of chemical analysis, with the assaying and gold working branch of the firm run by Kellogg. On April 2, 1855, an announcement appeared in the *Alta California*, stating that Kellogg had formed a partnership with former U.S. Assayer Augustus Humbert at 104 Montgomery Street. Note: The preceding information from Dan Owens seems to supersede that given by Edgar H. Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California, 1849-55*, pp. 83-84.

ter eagle), $3, $5 (half eagle), $10 (eagle) and $20 (double eagle) may be studied in relation to each other.

Among silver coins the different values were all extensively circulated at the time of their issue, with the result that very few Mint State coins exist today. Any coins lost in shipwrecks (probably not as intentional cargo, but as "passenger silver") would have been heavily etched or dissolved by seawater. Thus, silver coins do not figure in the history of the *Brother Jonathan* (or the *Central America*), although such pieces were aboard.

At the San Francisco Mint gold coins were made of various denominations from the $1 to the $20, the last being by far the most popular. In the West Coast economy in which paper money was not used in commerce during the 1854-1865 period under study, the $20 double eagle reigned supreme as the largest federal coin of the land. These were the coins of choice for large transactions and export shipments (mainly to New York City). The heavy and impressive double eagles represented the most efficient way to convert gold metal into coins and were the easiest to count.

Many double eagles were shipped from San Francisco to the East via steamers to Nicaragua or Panama, connecting over land, then by sea to New Orleans or, more often, to New York City. In a later era in the 1860s, double eagles were shipped northward from San Francisco to Portland to provide coinage for the new gold rush commerce in the Pacific Northwest.

Now and again a ship was lost, and gold treasures went to the bottom of the sea. The S.S. *Central America* (sunk in 1857) and the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* (1865) have both been found, and both have yielded high-quality gold coins, the *Central America* find being the more extensive. It is numismatically fortunate that both of these ships were from different time periods and thus carried different mixtures of dates and varieties. Prior to these discoveries, certain varieties had been virtually unobtainable in choice or gem condition for *any* price, as such coins were not saved by collectors in the 1850s and 1860s. Interest in them developed at a much later date, by which time virtually all available examples were well worn.

As unusual as it might seem to the modern day numismatic community, whose members are enthusiastic concerning just about everything, there was virtually no interest in collecting even small denomination San Francisco silver and gold coins when they were minted. While numismatists were active in San Francisco by the mid 1860s, they did not acquire current issues for their cabinets.

In 1866 J. Henry Applegate, Jr., of the same city, reported to the editor of the newly founded *American Journal of Numismatics* that it would be difficult to locate as many as 12 collectors in San Francisco, in order to incorporate a numismatic society there.[1] The November 1867 issue carried a note from him to the effect that numismatics "once carried on with ardor, is now almost extinct; but there remains at least one student...." That student, presumably, was Applegate himself, who did not collect S-Mint coins.

Around the same time another local collector, Mr. Repiton, publicized that he owned some great rarities in the American series, including an 1804 silver dollar (unfortunately, it was considered spurious by other numismatists).[2] He did, however, have a rare silver dollar of 1852 for which he had paid $20 in gold.

A early coin dealer in the same city was W.F. Greany, who seems to have become active by the late 1870s, after which he acted as a source for S-Mint coins for interested collectors.[3] However, by that time about the best grades that could be found for most silver coins of the 1850s and 1860s were EF or AU. Further, he seems to have handled only minor and silver coins and, possibly, small denomination gold. So far as is known, there was not a *single* numismatist in the entire United States who collected large-denomination San Francisco gold coins at the time!

John Jay Knox, a brilliant man and an accomplished numismatist, spent time in 1866 visiting the San Francisco Mint on behalf of the Treasury Department, interviewing its employees, and studying its operations. However, Knox's main coin collecting interest at the time seems to have been copper half cents and cents, none of which were made on the West Coast.

By 1893, when Augustus G. Heaton published his treatise, *Mint Marks*, listing 17 "causes of attractiveness" for collecting branch mint pieces, there were probably only a few dozen numismatists interested in mintmark varieties of lower silver denominations such as half dimes and dimes, and fewer still for quarters and half dollars. These collectors were not condition conscious, and for even a major cabinet a nice VF or EF coin would do. No particular effort was made to track down Mint State coins. Heaton, who was well connected in the hobby and in the next year would be elected president of the American Numismatic Association, did not know of even *one* collector who was interested in mintmark varieties of $5, $10, or $20 coins.

1 *American Journal of Numismatics*, December 1866.

2 Applegate, letter dated July 18, 1867, later published in the *American Journal of Numismatics*.

3 The following is adapted from the writer's commentary in the Eliasberg Collection catalogue of 1996: W.F. Greany was a numismatist by the 1870s, and by 1881 was operating a coin and curiosity shop in San Francisco. For much of the late nineteenth century he did business at 827 Brannan Street in that city. In February 1887 he advertised in *The Curiosity World*: "My 4th edition catalogue has just been published and contains selling prices of all the U.S. dollars, halves, quarters, 20 pieces, dimes, half dimes, nickel fives and threes, and two and one cent pieces. A fine line of electrotypes, a complete list of all the Confederate notes issued, a complete list of U.S. Fractional Currency. The best catalogue published. It contains 32 pages of useful information." In the 1890s he was one of the few American dealers to have an inventory of coins by mintmark varieties, at which time he furnished Carson City and San Francisco issues to specialists such as John M. Clapp. By 1900 Greany had relocated to 838 Guerrere Street, San Francisco.

By the time that interest in mintmarks became widespread after the publication of Heaton's study in 1893 and, especially, after the tiny "S" on a 1909-S V.D.B. cent attracted a lot of attention 16 years later, 1854-1865 Liberty Seated silver coins from the San Francisco Mint were generally unobtainable except in well worn grades.

The situation for mintmarked gold coins of higher denominations is even more dramatic, for these were not generally collected until the 1930s and not extensively sought by numismatists until the 1940s, by which time nearly all opportunities to acquire Mint State coins had been lost forever (or, in some instances, *almost* forever).

The preceding stated, it becomes clear why certain *high-mintage* San Francisco Mint coins of the 1850s and 1860s can be common or slightly scarce in worn grades, but be *major rarities or even nonexistent* in Mint State.

The Grading of Coins

While there are many reference books and guides to grading that can be consulted, the most prominent of which are *Photograde* (James F. Ruddy) and the *Official American Numismatic Association Grading Standards for U.S. Coins* (introductory material by A. Kosoff and Q. David Bowers, compilation by Kenneth E. Bressett), a brief sketch of grading terms and other characteristics is given below in connection with the present study.

Based upon a formula published by Dr. William H. Sheldon in *Early American Cents* (1949), coins are graded by a combination of adjectives and numbers, or letter and number abbreviations can be used. The numerical scale ranges from 1 (worn nearly smooth, barely discernible) to 70 (absolutely perfect). Major divisions are as follows:

ANA and *Photograde* Coin Grading Scale

Poor-1: No abbreviation. Worn virtually smooth. Barely identifiable as to type. Date may be worn away.

Fair-2: No abbreviation. Very worn. Most inscriptions and possibly the date missing, but better than Poor-1.

About Good: AG-3. Worn nearly smooth, but date discernible. Most lettering, stars, etc., worn away.

Good: G-4, G-5, and G-6.[1] Extensively worn, but date clear and stars mostly if not completely present. On silver coins the word LIBERTY on the shield will be worn away.

Very Good: VG-8 and VG-10. Well worn, but with all lettering distinct, more so than for G-4. On silver coins about three or so letters in LIBERTY can be read.

Fine: F-12 and F-15. Extensive wear, but much detail is visible on the head (of Miss Liberty on gold coins), wreath, etc. On silver coins the word LIBERTY will be readable, but barely.

Very Fine: VF-20, VF-25, VF-30, and VF-35. Light, even wear. Details missing on higher parts of the design, but most hair outlines (on gold coins) and folds of drapery on Miss Liberty (silver coins) can be seen. A highly acceptable grade for many San Francisco issues, and often representing a rarity as such. For certain silver coins in the 1850s and large denomination gold coins, especially $2.50 to and including $10, a VF-20 or VF-30 coin may be in the top 10% of specimens known, quality wise.

Extremely Fine: EF-40 and EF-45. A coin with very light wear. All details visible including hair strands, drapery folds, etc. Some traces of original mint frost may be seen in protected areas, this being especially true for gold coins.

About Uncirculated: AU-50, AU-53, AU-55, AU-58. Rubbing or friction is seen on the high points and in the fields, but much mint lustre still remains, more so for gold coins than for silver issues. For many San Francisco issues, gold and silver, this is a very desirable, indeed *elegant* grade in the context of the series. Certain San Francisco issues such as rare varieties of $10 pieces from the early 1860s are not known in grades finer than this.

Mint State (Uncirculated): MS-60 continuously to MS-70. A coin which has never been in general circulation, but which may have been stored or handled, even roughly. For lower ranges such as MS-60 and MS-61, bagmarks and nicks may be very extensive, fewer on MS-62, and with just a scattering on MS-63 (sometimes called *choice* Mint state). MS-64 coins have still fewer marks. MS-65 (also called *gem* Mint State) represents an extremely high quality coin with just a few scattered marks here and there, with full unimpaired mint lustre and frost. Higher grades from MS-66 to MS-70 are rarely used in the context of San Francisco coins, but usually refer to coins that were struck for collectors (such as modern sets and commemoratives) and handled with gloves from the moment they left the press.

Practical Aspects of Grading San Francisco Coins

The mint at San Francisco was, literally, a coin factory. The employees were charged with producing as many coins as possible in the shortest span of time. Absolutely no attention was given to handling the coins with care. They were struck on high-speed steam-driven presses, and when coined were ejected from the press into a box or bin. As minting progressed, other coins would fall on top of them in the same container. When several hundred had been struck, the coins—jostling against each other—would be taken into another room and dumped on a wooden counting board, shaken and arranged in rows, and counted. After that point, they were put in cloth bags and stored. From time to time, the bags would be moved around, sometimes tossed carelessly.

In due course, the coins, either in bags (if a large quantity) or singly in smaller amounts, would be paid out to depositors of silver and gold bullion, banks, and others. By the time that a typical large, heavy coin such as a double eagle left the portals of the Mint it might be in a grade such as MS-62 or MS-63, from the procedures to which it had been subjected. Smaller coins such as silver half dimes and dimes and gold coins from the $1 to the $3 denominations, being of lighter weight, were less susceptible to acquiring marks and scuffs, and a typical coin leaving the Mint would likely be in a slightly higher grade such as MS-63 to MS-64.

[1] In instances in which two or more numbers [illegible] (for example, such as G-4, G-5, and G-6) the higher numbers are slightly finer.

Once a typical coin left the Mint and went into the vault or storage area of its owner, it was probably jostled some more. In time, it reached general hand-to-hand circulation. Once that happened, a coin was apt to be used intensely. Gold coins recovered from the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* sunk in 1865, demonstrate that it only took two or three years before a large gold coin would wear down to the grade of EF, and coins from the previous decade might be worn down to VF. Thus by summer 1865, coins dated from the early 1860s no longer were Mint State, while those dated 1865 and many dated 1864 were.

For the reasons outlined, it is seen why the vast majority of 1854-1865 San Francisco Mint coins seen today are well worn. Few Mint State pieces exist at all in the silver series, and in the gold series the only significant occurrences of Mint State coins are from treasure finds and hoards, these applying only to a few selected issues.

Coin Values

There are several factors which affect the value of a coin. The following are relevant to San Francisco Mint issues:

Rarity (absolute): The rarity of a coin, or the number known to exist, is an obvious indicator of value. All things being equal, a coin of which just 10 to 15 specimens are known (such as the 1854-S $2.50) will be a highly prized rarity. On the other hand, if it is plentiful and many thousands are known, it will sell for a "common" price. To bring a generous price, a rare coin must also be popular (see "Demand" below).

Rarity (condition): A San Francisco Mint coin can be rare in more than one way. A coin can be relatively common overall, but in a *high grade* it can be a *rarity*. As an example, an 1858-S $20 is fairly plentiful in worn grades such as VF and EF, even scarce AU, but is a major rarity if choice Mint State (MS-63). Thousands of VF coins exist. In contrast, the number of choice MS-63 coins can be counted on one's hands with some fingers left over. Thus, an MS-63 coin will sell for many multiples of the price of a worn coin of the same date and mintmark.

Quality: Within any given grade there are differences in quality. Such aspects as attractiveness of the surface, presence or absence of mint frost and luster, sharpness of striking, and old-fashioned "eye appeal" enter into the value equation. If two coins each graded MS-60 are placed side by side, and one is attractive and pleasing to the eye and the other is stained and ugly, the knowledgeable buyer will pay more for the finer one.

Demand: Demand affects the price of all coins. If many collectors and investors desire to own a given coin, there will be many buyers, and the price will be high. On the other hand, if few collectors are interested, the price will be low. All San Francisco silver and gold coins in the study period 1854-1865 are in strong numismatic demand, so this point may be moot. However, even among San Francisco Mint coins, certain series are more popular than others. Among gold coins, the $1 and $20 values are probably the most avidly collected, followed in order by the $2.50, $3, $5, and $10. A curious case is provided by the 1864-S $10, a major rarity, indeed one of the most elusive coins in the entire American series, which has received virtually no publicity in the past, resulting in the market value being quite moderate. The same thing could be said for the 1860-S Liberty Seated quarter dollar.

Romance and history: Demand itself is composed of several factors. In general, the more *interesting* a coin is to own, the more buyers will want to acquire it. Not only do San Francisco Mint coins of the era under discussion have elements of grade and popularity, they also have the quintessential aspects of romance, being an integral part of the Gold Rush. Further, coins with a "story," such as pieces recovered from the wrecks of the sidewheel steamers *S.S. Central America* and *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* have the added appeal of being a tangible link with history. These are the numismatic equivalent of being able to own gold artifacts from King Tut's tomb! If a coin has a provenance or "pedigree," such as to a famous collection, this will create additional demand for it.

The Eliasberg Collection Coins

A window on the traditional numismatic availability of San Francisco Mint coins is provided by the Eliasberg Collection.

Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr., a well-known Baltimore financier, accomplished what no person had ever done before and probably no one will never do again: he formed a collection complete with at least one of every known date and mintmark variety of United States coin from the 1793 half cent to the 1933 double eagle. Most of these were of exceptional quality. Indeed, often they were among the finest pieces to come on the market in his collecting era, which began in the mid-1920s and extended to 1950. Many coins were acquired from the cabinet of John M. Clapp, a pioneer Pennsylvania oil man who was among the first in this country to collect branch mint coins, building his holdings in the general period from the 1880s to 1906, after which his collection passed to his son, J.H. Clapp, who added to it.[1] Clapp may have been the very first person to endeavor to acquire one of each date and mintmark in the large denomination gold series, including double eagles, having started to look for them in the 1880s. Apparently, he was unknown to Augustus G. Heaton when the latter published his *Mint Marks* treatise in 1893.

In an era before such terms as MS-61, MS-62, etc., were invented, most numismatists simply sought, for example, a "nice" Uncirculated coin, or an attractive VF or EF. Once a suitable specimen was acquired the collection was not upgraded.

The Eliasberg Collection, catalogued by me and other experts on my staff and presented at auction in three sales in 1982, 1996, and 1997, included a complete selection of San Francisco Mint coins. Reflective of the availability and rarity of these issues in the old-time era of collecting, the following inventory of 1854-1865 coins may be of interest. At the same time it serves as a check list of which denomi-

[1] In *Harper's Weekly,* November 26, 1864, the President Petroleum Company, of President, Venango County, Pennsylvania, placed a large advertisement (p. 768) offering $5,000,000 in shares of capital stock, an immense sum at the time. John M. Clapp was the general resident superintendent of the firm. Later, Clapp also went into banking and investments in Washington, D.C.

nations and years were made (omissions indicate none were struck that year):[1]

Half Dimes 1863-1865

1863-S: MS-62.
1864-S: MS-60.
1865-S: AU-58.

Dimes 1856-1865

1856-S: MS-61.
1858-S: MS-64.
1859-S: VF-30.
1860-S: MS-63+.
1861-S: EF-45.
1862-S: MS-66.
1863-S: MS-64.
1864-S: MS-63.
1865-S: MS-63.

Quarter Dollars 1855-1865

1855-S: MS-63.
1856-S: AU-58.
1857-S: MS-66, prooflike.
1858-S: AU-58.
1859-S: AU-55.
1860-S: F-15.
1861-S: F-15.
1862-S: MS-64.
1864-S: MS-66
1865-S: MS-63+.

Half Dollars 1855-1865

1855-S: EF-40.
1856-S: MS-65.
1857-S: F-15.
1858-S: MS-64.
1859-S: MS-66.
1860-S: MS-60.
1861-S: MS-64.
1862-S: MS-66.
1863-S: AU-58+.
1864-S: MS-60.
1865-S: MS-61.

Silver Dollar 1859

1859-S: AU-50.

Gold Dollars 1854-1860

1854-S: MS-65.
1856-S: EF-45.
1857-S: EF-40.
1858-S: AU-55.
1859-S: VF-30.
1860-S: EF-40.

$2.50 Quarter Eagles 1854-1860

1854-S: VG/G. A famous rarity; only 10 to 15 are known
1856-S: AU-55.
1857-S: AU-55.
1859-S: EF/AU.
1860-S: MS-65.
1861-S: AU-50.
1862-S: VF/EF.
1863-S: MS-65.
1865-S: AU-50+.

$3 Gold 1855-1860

1855-S: EF-40.
1856-S: AU-50.
1857-S: EF-45.
1860-S: MS-65.

$5 Half Eagles 1854-1860

1854-S: AU-55. The rarest of all San Francisco coins; just three are known.
1855-S: AU-55.
1856-S: EF-40.
1857-S: AU-50.
1858-S: EF-40.
1859-S: EF-40.
1860-S: AU-55+.
1861-S: VG-8.
1862-S: EF-40.
1863-S: VF-20.
1864-S: EF-40/VF-30.
1865-S: EF-40.

$10 Eagles 1854-1860

1854-S: AU-50.
1855-S: EF-45.
1856-S: EF-45.
1857-S: EF-45.
1858-S: VF 30.
1859-S: VF-30.
1860-S: VF-30.
1861-S: VF-20.
1862-S: VF-30.
1863-S: EF-45.
1864-S: VF 20. A unheralded rarity; only 10 to 15 are known.
1865-S: EF-40.

$20 Double Eagles 1854-1860

1854-S: AU-55.
1855-S: MS-65.
1856-S: AU 50.
1857-S: MS-63/60.
1858-S: AU 55.
1859-S: AU 55.
1860-S: AU 50/55.
1861-S: EF-40
1861-S Paquet Reverse: VF 20
1862-S: VF-30.
1863-S: VF 30.
1864-S VF 30.
1865-S: VF 20.

[1] In instances in which multiple specimens of the same date and mintmark were in the collection only the highest graded piece is listed.

The newly remodeled San Francisco Mint on Commercial Street, as it appeared in 1855. The facility had been used earlier by Curtis, Perry & Ward to strike coins under the franchise of the United States Assay Office of Gold and their related private business, Moffat & Co. After the structure was sold to the government in 1853 it was widened by 20 feet and renovated, to final dimensions of 60 feet square by three stories high. The interior rooms were very small, and the facilities were too cramped for the various assaying, refining, and coining processes conducted. There was no room for the office of the superintendent, forcing the overseer of operations to rent premises in another building! In fact, the low-volume branch mints at Charlotte (North Carolina) and Dahlonega (Georgia) had much finer appointments and were in larger buildings. Despite these conditions, the San Francisco Mint turned out many millions of coins beginning in April 1854, with the large and impressive gold $20 double eagles accounting for the largest production value. This building was used for many years thereafter, until a new and much larger granite-faced facility was built in the early 1870s and occupied in 1873. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1854)

History and Commentary

The first coinage dies shipped from the Philadelphia Mint arrived in San Francisco on March 15, 1854, along with some supplemental machinery. By the end of the same month the staff positions had been filled, including over a dozen ladies who were to adjust the weights of gold coin planchets by placing them on scales and filing away any excess metal. Close to 70 people were on the staff on opening day.

On April 3 the first deposit of gold was received. On April 15th, the first coins were struck, double eagles of the federal design and with a distinctive S mintmark. Superintendent L.A. Birdsall sent the first one, a glittering brilliant mirror-surface Proof, to Philadelphia for the Mint Cabinet.

From the outset the new mint emphasized the coinage of gold. After this year the Philadelphia Mint, which had considered California gold to be largely a nuisance, was relieved of large amounts of coinage of this metal. In general, gold coins from California metal were struck at San Francisco, while quantities of unparted gold desired to be refined into high-quality bars were shipped to the New York City Assay Office which also opened this year.

The first delivery of coins bearing S mintmarks took place on April 19 and consisted of $2.50, $5, $10, and $20 denominations.[1] Gold $1 pieces were first delivered later in April. By the end of the month all current gold denominations had been made, save for the $3 (which would not be struck until 1855).

However, it was soon learned that nearly all depositors preferred the larger values, and later production emphasized $10 and $20 coins. It is to be recalled that at the time there was no paper money in use in California or elsewhere along the Pacific Coast, thus placing an inordinate pressure and demand on the $20 double eagle to facilitate large transactions and to simplify the counting of large reserves. A local craftsman supplied small wooden boxes to the Mint, suitable for steamer shipments of $20 coins, these being the denomination of choice for export to the East Coast.

Even though the $10 and $20 denominations were appreciated by those dealing in large sums of money, these coins did little to help everyday transactions in local channels of commerce. Accordingly, it seems that the *private* coinage of tiny gold 25, 50, and $1 coins proliferated, although contemporary information concerning small denomination gold pieces is scarce. Meanwhile, Spanish-American silver coins were dominant in smaller change, down to and including the familiar two-reals or "two bits" piece worth 25. The situation was helped somewhat when "quite a lot of silver coins were shipped from the East Coast."[2] By 1854, both the Philadelphia and New Orleans mints had struck millions of new, lighter-weight silver coins after the standard of February 21, 1853. Presumably, most coins shipped west were of the quarter and half dollar denominations, as there was little call for smaller pieces.

A lively trade in gold bars involved banks and merchants who desired these not for local commerce, but for shipment by sea to New York, London, or other financial centers. In addition to the activities of the local Mint, several large private firms advertised to deliver gold bars at prices competitive with the Mint, and sometimes more quickly.

The large octagonal $50 gold coins, minted in San Francisco by Augustus Humbert and the United States Assay Office of Gold in 1851 and 1852, were becoming scarce in commercial channels by 1854, although the very occasional piece was seen as late as the early 1860s. In March 1854 the local merchants petitioned Congress to authorize the soon-to-be-opened San Francisco Mint to make coins of the $50 denomination, again because there were no paper notes in circulation for use in large transactions. In keeping with tradition that dated back to the very founding of the state, legislators in Washington, D.C., ignored the plea.[3]

In the first year of operation of the San Francisco Mint, 1854, production seems to have gone smoothly and according to expectations.

1854-S $1 Gold Dollar

1854-S gold $1. The design is of the Liberty Head style by James B. Longacre, as first used at other mints in 1849. (Pennsylvania Cabinet)

Mintage: 14,632.

[1] R.W. Julian, "The Original 'S' Mint."

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] James Guthrie, secretary of the Treasury, responded with his opinion on March 21, 1854, noting that even $20 gold pieces did not circulate much in the East, "but are soon passed into the possession of the banks and bankers, and their places supplied by bank paper." This being the case, even larger $50 pieces would be of little use there. However, there was no paper money in circulation in California, and "The high scale of prices prevalent in California for commodities and services will make larger denominations of coin convenient, particularly in counting and passing large sums." Guthrie recommended that $100, $50, and $25 gold coins be authorized for coinage at the San Francisco Mint and be called the Union, Half Union, and Quarter Union, "but that the Half Union only be struck for the present." Although Guthrie's suggestion and subsequent legislation by Senator William M. Gwin received favorable notice, and the Senate

Rarity in circulated grades: In worn grades most pieces seen today are in such grades as VF and EF, with AU coins being in the distinct minority. At least a few hundred pieces are known, perhaps 500 (suggesting a conservation ratio of slightly more than 3% of the mintage). Examples always find a ready market with collectors due to the status of the variety as the first San Francisco gold dollar and also the only S-Mint gold dollar of the Type I design.

Rarity in Mint State: Probably fewer than 50 Mint State coins exist totally, and the number may even be below 30. Mint State coins cover a range of grades from basic MS-60 to gem MS-65, but only a handful are known at the upper range.

Hoards: None.[1]

Dies and die varieties: Five pairs of dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint for the initial coinage of gold dollars, but it is not certain that all were used. In any event, unused dies were of no lasting utility, as the next mintage of San Francisco gold dollars was in 1856, by which time the design had been changed to the Type II.

Notes: All of the 1854-S gold dollars are of the Type I design by James B. Longacre (with Liberty Head and coronet, a miniature version of the $20 gold motif). Later in the year the Philadelphia Mint produced a revised design, the Type II motif, but this was not used in San Francisco.

Notes concerning all San Francisco Mint gold $1 pieces 1854-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in his monograph, *Mint Marks*, offered the first in-depth study of branch mint issues. For gold dollars he commented: "The San Francisco issues are seven. 1854, '56, '57, '58, '59, '60, and '70, all being obtainable but the latter, which is excessively rare and the only one of the gold dollar mintmarks which we do not possess."[2]

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, studied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. For San Francisco Mint gold dollars he noted these grades: 1854-S (EF, H.P. Smith sale, 1906), 1856-S (Fine, Favenson sale, 1903), 1857-S (Fine, Smith sale, 1906), 1858-S (VG, Smith sale, 1906), 1859-S (Fine, Smith sale, 1906); and 1860-S (VF, Smith sale, 1906). This is informative at an early date in the market for United States gold coins that Uncirculated (Mint State) coins from San Francisco were elusive. In contrast, most Philadelphia Mint coins in Adams' listing were Uncirculated.

1854-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

1854-S gold $2.50, the first issue of this denomination from the San Francisco Mint. Only 246 were struck, of which fewer than 15 can be traced today. The specimen shown here is the first example known to numismatists and was discovered by B. Max Mehl in 1910, later passing to John H. Clapp, then to Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. (Eliasberg Collection)

Mintage: 246.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1854-S is an extreme rarity and, indeed, a great American classic, as its mintage would suggest. It is estimated that no more than 15 specimens exist—perhaps even as few 10 or 11—all of which are in worn grades.

Walter Breen's *Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (1988) gives a roster of nine specific pieces in these grades and their first known appearance:

1. VF or better, the finest known. Davis-Graves Collection, Stack's, 1954.

2. VF with nick above 13th star. William Cutler Atwater Collection, B. Max Mehl, 1946.

3. VF+, scratch on reverse. F.C.C. Boyd Collection auctioned as "The World's Greatest Collection," Numismatic Gallery, 1946.

4. F-VF. Waldo Newcomer Collection, Baltimore, MD.[3]

5. Fine, scratched. Belden Roach Collection, B. Max Mehl, 1944.

6. VG-Fine. Kreisberg-Schulman sale, February 1960, Lot 2592.

7. VG/G. Unspecified "western bank" to B. Max Mehl in 1910, subsequently to H.O. Granberg, Elmer Sears, John H. Clapp, to Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Cited in *The Numismatist*, May 1911 (see below), although Mehl is not mentioned(!). In later years, circa 1956, Mehl told the writer that the finding of this coin was one of his most memorable accomplishments, coming as it did early in his illustrious career (which extended from the turn of the century until his death in 1957).

8. Texas private collection, loop removed, traces of solder.

9. Texas private collection, another, obverse VF scratch, reverse with shank removed.

10-11. Breen: "There are at least two others around."

In the June 1946 issue of *The Numismatist* the Hollinbeck Stamp & Coin Co. (Art and Paul Kagin) took eight pages of advertising to offer an important selection of United States and private gold coins including an 1854-S quarter eagle described as Uncirculated. No later account of this coin has been found, nor does the writer know if it fits into the above listing.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Five pairs of dies were shipped to San Francisco for the 1854-S $2.50 coinage, but only one pair was used. On the obverse the 1 of the date is embedded in the neck. The undated reverses were held over as they could be used later.

Notes: Christian Gobrecht's Liberty Head motif was employed for the $2.50, $5, and $10. The Gobrecht motif had been created in 1838 and was first used in that year at the

passed Gwin's bill by a large majority, the proposal died in the House of Representatives. Years later in 1877 a few $50 pattern coins were made at the Philadelphia Mint, but no circulating coinage materialized. Still later, in 1915, $50 gold commemorative coins were struck in San Francisco for use at the Panama Pacific International Exposition.

[1] Hoards are defined as long-hidden groups of a given denomination, date, and mintmark of coin that are found or dispersed many years after they were minted. The writer's *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997, studies the subject.

[2] The 1870-S is beyond the scope of the present study. 3,000 were struck, of which 1,000 may have been issued from a die omitting the mintmark (an error). Today the 1870-S is viewed as being rare, but not "excessively" so.

[3] Much of Newcomer's collection was sold on consignment to B. Max Mehl 1931-1933; other portions were dispersed elsewhere including auctions in the same decade through J.C. Morgenthau & Co. (catalogued by Wayte Raymond and James G. Macallister).

Philadelphia Mint for the coinage of $10 pieces. In the $2.50 series it was first employed in 1840.

Notes concerning all San Francisco Mint $2.50 pieces 1854-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in *Mint Marks*, commented: "The San Francisco issues are from 1854 to 79, except 55, 64, and 74. The great prize of the series is 1858."[1]

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States, Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, studied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. For San Francisco Mint issues he noted these grades: 1854-S ("no record of public sale"); 1856-S (Uncirculated, W.S. Appleton sale, 1907); 1857-S (Uncirculated, W.S. Appleton sale, 1907); 1858-S ("no record of public sale"; Adams was not aware that *none were minted*); 1859-S ("no record of public sale"); and 1860-S (Fine, Appleton sale, 1907). In contrast, most Philadelphia Mint coins in the survey were Uncirculated.

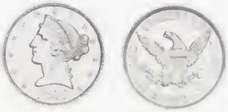
The Discovery of the First 1854-S Quarter Eagle: The aforementioned Adams, writing somewhat disingenuously in May 1911, revealed this, completely omitting mention of the real discoverer, B. Max Mehl:[2]

"*The Numismatist* is in a position to state for the benefit especially of the quarter eagle collectors that the long-sought-for 1854 $2.50 gold piece of the San Francisco Mint has come to light, and is now in the collection of Mr. H.O. Granberg of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. This rare mintmark recently came to Mr. Granberg's notice, and of course was carefully examined by him. It was found to be authentic beyond a doubt. Mr. Hudson Chapman has also examined the coin, and has stated that it was the only specimen of the variety that had ever been located.[3] The coin is in a good state of preservation, but has seen considerable circulation.

"According to the *Mint Report* of 1854 exactly 246 quarter eagles were struck at San Francisco, but all seem to have disappeared until this specimen came to notice. This was the first year of the operation of the San Francisco Mint, which produced very few coins for the reason that there was a great scarcity of acids used for refining the gold and also of silver used to alloy the gold to bring it up to the United States coin standard. It was this scarcity of acids and silver that often compelled the branch mint to suspend coinage in the early fifties, and accounts for the tremendous productions of the private coining establishments of Wass, Molitor & Co. and Kellogg & Co."[4]

Mehl himself, writing in his catalogue of the Belden Roach Collection (1944), gave his version: "Until 1910 not a single specimen of this coin was known to exist in any collection. I discovered one specimen through my extensive advertising. It was sold to Mr. John Clapp of Washington at over $500. This coin later went into the Eliasberg Collection."

1854-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)



1854-S gold $5, the first issue of this denomination from the San Francisco Mint. Only 268 were minted, and from this small quantity only three are known to exist today. This specimen was sold in 1946 as part of the collection of Frederick C.C. Boyd and was acquired by Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. (Eliasberg Collection)

Mintage: 268.

Rarity in circulated grades: As the minuscule mintage suggests, the 1854-S $5 is a great rarity today, indeed one of the most elusive of all American gold coins. Only three specimens are known to exist of which only two are in private hands. These are:

AU. Finest known. F.C.C. Boyd Collection sold as part of "The World's Greatest Collection," 1946, to Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr., now in a fine Midwest collection.

EF. From an unspecified western collection prior to 1941, later owned by Samuel Wolfson and Mrs. R. Henry Norweb.

EF with rim nicks and scrapes. Waldo C. Newcomer Collection, Baltimore, to Col. E.H.R. Green in the early 1930s, later to King Farouk (Cairo, Egypt), to Josiah K. Lilly, to the Smithsonian Institution.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Five pairs of dies were shipped for the 1854-S $5 coinage, but only one pair was used. The undated reverse dies were held over for later use.

Notes: The design is the Liberty Head motif created by Christian Gobrecht in 1838 for the $10 and first used on the $5 denomination in 1839. The reverse depicts a perched eagle.

From 1854 through 1857, half eagles were struck each year at all five active mints: Philadelphia, Charlotte, Dahlonega, New Orleans and San Francisco. These five mints also struck quarter eagles in 1854 and 1856. These represent the only instances in American numismatics in which so many different mints struck the same denominations within a given year.

Notes concerning all San Francisco Mint $5 pieces 1854-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in *Mint Marks*, noted: "The San Francisco list extends from 1854 to 88. Its first issue, '54, is exceedingly rare and should command a high price. 1864 and '76 are rare, '75 and '62 [*sic*; this is an earlier date] are scarce. The rest should be readily found in the far western banks."

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States, Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, stud-

[1] Knowledge concerning mintmarks was very sketchy at the time, and Heaton was not aware that no 1858-S $2.50 pieces were struck; this commentary no doubt prompted what Adams said in 1909 (see below).

[2] Adams was probably the most careful researcher of his time. However, perhaps professional jealousy (in addition to being a newspaper reporter, Adams was also a rare coin dealer) took precedence over numismatic accuracy and fairness, and Mehl was omitted for this reason; there may be some other explanation.

[3] Samuel Hudson Chapman was born on July 15, 1857, joined the staff of Philadelphia rare coin dealer J.W. Haseltine in 1876, and in June 1878 formed a rare coin dealership with his younger brother Henry (born in 1859). For many years—from the landmark auction of the Charles I. Bushnell Collection in 1882, until the partnership was dissolved in 1906, the Chapman brothers were known as the pre-eminent American auctioneers of fine rare coin collections, although they had many notable competitors. On his own account, from 1907 to 1924, S.H. Chapman cataloged 28 further auction sales. He retired in 1929 and died on September 22, 1931.

[4] This theory seems to be at least in part incorrect, as at the San Francisco Mint the difficulty was in the *removal* of excess silver from native gold, not *adding* it. A similar statement appears in Adams, *Private Gold Coinage of California 1849-55*, p. 85. Moreover, much of the Kellogg and Wass, Molitor coinage occurred *before* the San Francisco Mint was opened.

[5] Heaton probably gained this information from the appropriate *Mint Report*, not from observing the market.

ied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. For San Francisco Mint issues he noted these grades: 1854-S ("no record of public sale"); 1855-S (VF, Wilson sale, 1907); 1856-S (VF, Wilson sale, 1907); 1857-S (Fine, Wilson sale, 1907); 1858-S ("no record of public sale"); 1859-S ("no record of public sale"); and 1860-S (EF, Taylor-Windle sale, 1907). In contrast, most Philadelphia Mint coins in the survey were Uncirculated.

1854-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

1854-S $10 gold. This design was produced continuously through the end of the study period (1865). The Liberty Head motif is similar to that used on $2.50 and $5 pieces and is the design of Christian Gobrecht. (Stetson University Collection)

Mintage: 123,826.

Rarity in circulated grades: Plentiful in worn grades, as indicated by the very generous mintage, with most being VF or EF. In such circulated grades it is the most plentiful of all San Francisco Mint $10 coins of the study period (1854-1865). AU examples are rare.

Rarity in Mint State: A handful exist in lower Mint State grades such as MS-60 or 61 plus one or two at the choice level.

Hoards: None reported.

Dies and die varieties. Six pairs of dies were shipped from the Philadelphia Mint to San Francisco for use on the 1854-S $10 coinage. • All known specimens have a medium S [illegible] mintmark.

Notes: The design is the Liberty Head motif created by Christian Gobrecht in 1838 for the $10, slightly modified in 1839. The reverse depicts a perched eagle.

The mintage of the 1854-S $10 is anomalous, far greater than for any other year within the present study (1854-1865), and, in fact, a figure that was not challenged until 25 years later in 1879 when 224,000 1879-S eagles were made.

Note concerning all San Francisco Mint $10 pieces 1854-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in *Mint Marks*, noted: "The coinage at San Francisco is from 1854 to the present, except 1875. There are no very small issues, but pieces of '64 must be very scarce and '60, '76, '69, '59, '70, '55 and '67 follow apparently in the descending order of moderating importance." It is likely that Heaton was working from *Mint Report* figures, not actual experience, as he was not aware of even a single collection of branch mint $10 gold coins.

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, studied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. For *all* issues of the $10 Liberty Head type (except 1838) this comment was made: "Nearly all the eagles issued from 1838 up to 1907 are counted, bearing as a rule such small premiums, if any, that mention of them is scarcely worthwhile." As Adams was the foremost numismatic scholar of the decade and a dealer as well, this is certain evidence that such pieces were not widely collected. When S-Mint $10 pieces became desired in a significant way beginning in the 1930s, there were few high-grade pieces to be found.

1854-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

1854-S $20 gold, the first San Francisco Mint double eagle. This would prove to be the most popular of all gold coin denominations and the most convenient to use in large transactions. (King of Siam Sale)

Mintage: 141,468.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1854-S $20 is readily collectible in worn grades up to and including EF and AU, with VF and EF being typical. However, the 1854-S is scarcer in circulated grades than are any of the next several dates.

Rarity in Mint State: Several hundred exist (see Hoards below). Most of these are lightly etched, but not to the extent of the "seawater Uncirculated" pieces known for 1856-S (and a few 1855-S). The PCGS and NGC grading services routinely certify the lightly etched 1854-S pieces as normal Mint State issues, not mentioning the light etching. In contrast, deeply etched pieces require special certification and commentary. A few non-etched Mint State coins exist, primarily in lower levels from MS-60 to MS-62, and are very rare.

Rarity in Proof: The first 1854-S double eagle was struck on April 3, 1854. Perhaps first off the press was the Proof that is recorded as having been sent to the Mint Cabinet by Superintendent Lewis A. Birdsall. The coin is now in the National Coin Collection in the Smithsonian Institution (to which location the Mint Cabinet was transferred in 1923). This is the only Proof striking of any San Francisco Mint $20 of the design type. Interestingly, the only known Proof is from a different die pair than seen on any circulation strike. Perhaps one coin was struck, the dies removed from the press, and production dies (with normal, not polished surfaces) inserted, after which large scale production began.

Hoards: 1854-S double eagles exist from at least two different hoards, one consisting of very lightly etched coins and the other heavily etched:

Hoard No. 1: In the early 1970s hundreds of high-grade 1854-S $20 gold coins came on the market. These pieces, encountered with some regularity today, are sharp in detail, but have the fields very lightly etched from long-term immersion in salt water. Lustre remains, but is subdued. All have a uniform appearance indicating they had been kept together for a long time. Further, all display a fine network of die cracks on the reverse. When these unusually fine Mint State 1854-S double eagles appeared in coin collecting circles in the late 1970s, mixed and contradictory explanations as to their origin were given. One dealer stated that these coins were found between the studs of a wall in an old building in San Francisco when it was torn down. However, that did not account for the obvious indication that these pieces had been immersed in seawater.

Inspection of the uniform quality of the lightly etched surfaces suggests that there was just one find of high-grade pieces.[1]

Hoard No. 2: Around the same time, $20 specimens of 1855-S and 1856-S (the most plentiful date) with very heavily etched surfaces came to light, certainly from a different undersea source. It is said (Akers 1982, Breen 1988) that 1854-S pieces were also in this group. These have no traces of lustre remaining. The term "seawater Uncirculated" was devised to describe such coins. These probably came from a ship sunk in 1856 or slightly later. I am not aware of any large steamship that was lost at this time that would be a possibility. However, smaller steam vessels as well as sailing ships are not well documented in marine history, and the pieces could have been aboard a small ship.

Additional Hoard Information: Artifacts from the wrecked steamer *S.S. Yankee Blade* were salvaged by divers in 1977, and it was rumored that about 300 specimens of 1854-S gold $20 coins were found.[2] *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* implies that a hoard of "at least 100 pieces" came to light in July 1977, but was different from another cache he mentioned, possibly from another area on the same wreck: "Many more porous 'seawater Uncirculateds' came from a wreck (allegedly the *Yankee Blade*), some still encrusted." Thus, Breen refers to two hoards of 1854-S $20s, one of unknown surface quality and the other "porous." The descriptions seem somewhat confused.

Concerning quantities of etched-surface 1854-S $20 coins, David W. Akers added this information including still another rumored source:[3] "I know I have personally handled or seen 50 or more pieces from this hoard, and the surface texture varies widely. Some are 'lightly etched,' but many others are very monochromatic with what I call heavily granulated surfaces. I have even seen a few that have very little trace of 'seawater' etching yet obviously came from the same group. One of the rumors I heard persistently in the 1970s was that they were found at the bottom of a well in the San Francisco Bay area, the water brackish, which might account for the variations I've noted in surface texture."

Seawater etching: The degree of etching, if any, on various sea-salvaged coins seems to be related to several factors including the depth and temperature of the water, the proximity of the coins to other metal such as iron (which electrolytically "protects" coins), whether the coins were scattered or were clustered in groups (the latter situation seems to have protected most of the pieces), and the exposure of the coins to ocean currents.

Dies and die varieties: Eight pairs of dies were on hand for the 1854-S $20 coinage. • All seen have a large S mintmark. • Reverses of the $20 issues 1854-1857 exist with the A (STATES) either normal or broken.

Notes: The design is of the Liberty Head type, stylistically similar to the gold dollar. The motif was created by James B. Longacre in pattern form in 1849 and as a circulating issue in 1850.

Notes concerning all San Francisco Mint $20 pieces 1854-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in *Mint Marks,* noted: "The San Francisco Mint has issued this coin from 1854 to the present (except the void year 1886), in such uniformly large amounts that the smallest coinage (in 1887) is of 283,000 pieces. All should be common by this criterion." This opinion apparently was an assumption from reading *Mint Report* issues, for he knew of not a single numismatist who collected double eagles by mintmarks. Indeed, in 1893 Heaton was not able to find even a single person who collected branch mint gold coins of any denomination $5 or higher.

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States, Private and Territorial Gold Coins,* studied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. Not a single Liberty Head $20 was listed! The reason: "Not many of the double eagles command a premium, for the reason that there are only a few collectors who gather the denomination."

When S-Mint $20 pieces became desired in a significant way beginning in the 1930s, there were few high-grade pieces to be found.

Mint Director Snowden's comments: Among the denominations struck by the San Francisco Mint, the $20 was the most important. In the 1854 *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint,* James Ross Snowden commented on the popularity of that denomination:

"Depositors of large amounts [of bullion] call for coin in a form which gives the least trouble to count; and banking institutions, in addition to that, may prefer it in a form not likely to be drawn out. Many [of the general public] who present their checks at these institutions would doubtless ask for specie, but are deterred from doing so by the expectation of receiving double eagles instead of half or quarter eagles. In a word, the plain effect of issuing gold coin of a large size is to keep down the circulation of specie and increase the use of paper money. This remark, of course, does not apply to such localities where paper money is prohibited—as for example, in the state of California—because in such cases the different currencies cannot come in conflict."

Gold bars:

$5,641,504 value in unparted (natural gold) bars; $5,863 in fine bars.

Unparted bars were assayed and stamped with their gold content, weight, and value. Fine bars were refined to above 990 purity by extracting silver and other natural alloys. Such bars were intended for wholesale, bulk commercial, or export purposes and were not used as a medium of exchange. In addition to the preceding, in any given year many 900 fine (coinage standard) bars were made for use within the Mint, for reduction on the rolling mill to create planchet strips.[4]

In the 1854 *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint,* James Ross Snowden noted that in recent times depositors of bullion who wanted to export gold to London and other overseas centers desired bars, while depositors who wanted to use the proceeds domestically requested coins.

[1] Includes information from John J. Ford, Jr., 1993.

[2] Certain information is from Bowers, *American Coin Treasures and Hoards,* 1997; a detailed description of the sinking of the *S.S. Yankee Blade* is included in that text. Researcher Dan Owens has furnished a check list of contemporary newspaper accounts including: *Alta California,* October 30, [illegible] 11, 16, 22, and December 1, 1854, and January 6, 7, 10, 14, 16, 18, 23, 26, and 27, and April 6, 1855; the *New York Times* covered the event in issues of November 10, 1854, and January 26, 1855. For most gold coin recoveries from wrecks, caches, etc., information is very sketchy as the finders do not wish to be besieged with claimants, legal actions, etc.

[3] Letter, June 22, 1996. Notably, he reported seeing some 1854-S $20 coins with light etching and others with more extensive etching.

[4] The account book that contained information relating to such bars, *Weigh Clerk's Bullion Ledger Containing Accounts of Melter and Refiner with Treasurer, Coiner with Treasurer, and Treasurer with the United States, June 1854-March 1873,* was stored as part of the San Francisco Mint archives in San Bruno, CA, but was destroyed by federal officials in the 1970s along with certain other documents.

Mints Use California Gold

1854: Total California gold metal production: $69,433,931; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $10,842,281.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $35,671,185.

Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $6,328.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $211,169. This constituted 75% of the metal used at the Dahlonega Mint this year. This is the last of four years in which California gold was the main source of supply for this facility.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $981,511.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $9,221,457. This represents the first year of operation of the New York City Assay Office. After this time, much gold bullion that otherwise would have gone to Philadelphia was processed in New York into bars, a favorite form of gold for overseas shipments.

Description of the New Mint

The *Sacramento Union*, January 11, 1854, gave a view of the San Francisco Mint facilities then in the process of being completed:[1]

> The California Mint will be ready for delivery to the government in February. It will be capable of coining $100,000,000 per annum. The machinery is of the most approved style and finish, and the house adapted in every respect to receive and sustain the weight and force exerted by the working of the powerful engine which impels it. It will be proof against thieves and fire.
>
> There are three tubular boilers eight feet long by four feet diameter. The bedplate of the engine is solid iron, and weighs [illegible] tons. The fly wheel is 15 feet in diameter [illegible] The engine is [illegible] horse power. The machinery [illegible]

This account of the Mint appeared in the *Annals of San Francisco*:[4]

> [illegible]

On March 28, 1854, the *Alta California* printed a lengthy feature about the processes at the Mint, including this:[5]

> [After gold is refined and made into ingots or bars, the bars are made thinner by running them through a rolling mill.] The bar, not quite so thick as the coin, is taken thence to the cutting machine, which, by a punch cuts out from the bar round pieces. These pieces are called blanks.[6] The blanks are carried to the Annealing Room and washed with soap and water. They are then taken to the Adjusting Room. Here each blank is weighed separately, and made the exact weight for the coin. If too heavy, the blank is filed down; if too light, it is thrown into a box to be remelted. The work in this room is done entirely by ladies.
>
> The adjusted blanks are run through the milling machine, which compresses the blank to the exact diameter of the coin and raises the edge. The purpose of making the edge thicker is to make the coin pile neatly, to protect the figures, and to improve the general appearance. About 250 blanks are milled in a minute.
>
> The milled blanks are carried back to the Annealing Room, placed in an airtight cast iron box and placed in the furnace to be annealed, so that they may take the impression well. When they are at a cherry red they are taken out and poured immediately into water with a little sulfuric acid. This softens and cleans the gold. The blanks are taken out, washed with cold water, put into hot water again, taken out, mixed in with sawdust, which is then sifted off and the blanks are dry and perfectly clean.
>
> They are again taken to the Coining and Milling Room and stamped. The coining machine is elegant and massive. The blanks are placed in a tube or pipe, and from this the machine takes them one by one, puts them between dies, stamps them, throws them out of the die and carries them down in a box.
>
> They are then delivered to the treasurer and are ready for circulation. Such are the main features of the process. The difference between the United States coin [made at the Philadelphia Mint] and the California coin is that the latter is alloyed with silver, the former with copper. The California gold contains a good deal of silver, and it is troublesome and expensive to separate it from the gold; besides, it is more difficult to make a copper than a silver alloy. The California coin being one-tenth silver, is worth more than the United States coin, and a premium is paid for it at the United States mints. There is about 75 worth of silver in $100 of California gold coin. The copper is a much better alloy, being harder, more durable and more beautiful.
>
> All the machinery is of the best quality, having been manufactured under the supervision of George Eckfeldt, of the Philadelphia Mint.

[1] Citation from Dan Owens, manuscript of *An Encyclopedia of California Coiners and Assayers Related to Numismatics, 1849-1863.*

[2] This central steam engine supplied power to machines via a system of shafts and pulleys.

[3] This equals 75 per minute.

[4] Pages 525-526.

[5] Citation from Dan Owens, manuscript of *An Encyclopedia of California Coiners and Assayers Related to Numismatics, 1849-1863.*

[6] The term *blanks* correctly refers to discs of metal that are cut from strip. Numismatically, they are also called *planchets*. However, a more precise definition of *planchet* would be a blank that has been run through a milling machine to give it a raised rim, readying it for use in a coining press (R.W. Julian, letter, December 27, 1998).

[7] Coins struck from California gold with silver as a partial alloy tended to be [illegible] yellow, rather than the "warm" or rosy "more beautiful" hue of a Philadelphia Mint coin made of gold alloyed with a full 10% copper. On January 17, 1852, a reporter for the *San Francisco Herald* visited the private

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1855)

History and Commentary

In 1855 the coinage list was expanded at the San Francisco Mint, and the silver denominations of 25 and 50 and the gold $3 were produced for the first time. The quarters and half dollars represented the lower values generally popular in circulation in the West at the time, as few transactions took place for less than 25. It is probably the case that the majority of half dollars of the period under study were shipped to China and melted, this being especially true of the dates 1855-1859. The Chinese had an insatiable appetite for silver.

Among gold denominations the $1 and $2.50 denominations were not coined at the San Francisco Mint this year, probably because depositors did not request them. The Mint did not strike gold coins on speculation for the public, although some were produced for use as "change" for depositors. In commerce at the time, most transactions amounting up to several dollars were consummated by the ever popular Mexican silver "dollars."

On June 30, 1855, Judge Peter Lott became superintendent of the San Francisco Mint, succeeding L.A. Birdsall in the post. As before, the superintendent received his instructions and guidance from the director of the Mint in Philadelphia, James Ross Snowden. Lott held the office until June 29, 1857. Mint superintendents at that time (and also today) were political appointees, and while some had experience in manufacturing, metallurgy, or coinage, most did not.

Joining the San Francisco Mint in 1855 in the highly important post of assayer was Conrad Wiegand, an eccentric individual who later worked in the silver business in Virginia City, Nevada, where Mark Twain, then on the staff of the *Territorial Enterprise,* came into contact with him. In *Roughing It,* 1872, Twain gave a humorous description of the self-important, indeed preposterous Wiegand. It seems that his fellow employees at the San Francisco Mint considered Wiegand either incompetent or crazy, or both.[1]

1855-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

1855-S quarter dollar, the first issue of this denomination from the San Francisco Mint. In this year arrowheads were at each side of the date, a feature discontinued thereafter. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Mintage: 396,400.

Rarity in circulated grades: In worn grades the 1855-S quarter is scarce. This factor, coupled with its romance and desirability as the first San Francisco Mint quarter dollar and the only variety with arrows at date, has made it one of the most popular of all Liberty Seated coins of its denomination. Most 1855-S quarters are in low grades such as G and VG. Fine examples are scarce, VF scarcer yet, and anything EF or better is rare.

Rarity in Mint State: An estimated 10 to 15 Mint State specimens are known, including several choice examples. Most have frosty, lustrous surfaces. The Blauvelt Collection (1977) coin was catalogued as a virtually perfect gem and may be the very finest. Interestingly, in Mint State the 1855-S, while very rare in an absolute sense, is the most available Mint State S-Mint quarter dollar of the 1855-1865 years.

Rarity in Proof: The first 1855-S struck was a brilliant Proof. For reasons not clear today, Director Lewis A. Birdsall seems to have sent it not to the Mint Cabinet in Philadelphia, but to William W. Long's Museum Hotel in the same city,[2] after which it passed through several private cabinets including that of Dr. Edward Maris (1886), most recently appearing in the Bowers and Merena's Rarities Sale, August 1998, along with a companion Proof 1855-S half dollar. Apparently only one Proof quarter was struck.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four pairs of dies were sent to San Francisco for this issue, but not all were used. Apparently, only one obverse die was employed. • All have a large S mintmark on the reverse, from at least three different dies.

Notes: The silver quarter is of the Liberty Seated design, adapted from a motif created by Christian Gobrecht for the silver dollar in 1836 and later used on quarters beginning in 1838. The reverse features a perched eagle and inscription; the style is generally known as the without-motto type (without IN GOD WE TRUST, which was added in 1866). Arrowheads are at each side of the date on the 1855 coins, but were discontinued in 1856.

1855-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

1855-S half dollar, the first issue of this denomination from the San Francisco Mint. In this year arrowheads were at each side of the date, a feature discontinued thereafter. (James Bennett Pryor Collection)

Mintage: 129,950.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1855-S half dollar is very

mint of Wass, Molitor & Co., and commented on a process employed there: "The finishing touch is put to it by roasting it so as to give it a bright color." So far as is known, roasting was not done at the San Francisco Mint.

[1] As developed in court testimony in following years relating to the matter of Agoston Haraszthy (a file concerning which will appear in Dan Owens' forthcoming book, *An Encyclopedia of California Coiners and Assayers Related to Numismatics, 1849-1863;* this volume will also include many newspaper accounts relating to the San Francisco Mint from circa 1855 onward).

[2] In the 1850s William W. Long operated the Museum Hotel at [illegible] South 3rd Street in Philadelphia. Long was a numismatist of some note. Among the rarities he owned was an original Proof 1827 quarter dollar.

scarce in all grades. Most examples are well worn, with G and VG being about par. At higher levels such as EF or AU the 1855-S is a notable rarity. The elusive character of the 1855-S is explained by the shipment of most pieces to China for payment of goods.

Rarity in Mint State: In Mint State the 1855-S is of legendary rarity, and probably fewer than three or four *really* Uncirculated pieces are known, most of these being in the lower ranges of MS-60 to MS-62. The Pryor Collection (1996) coin was catalogued as a remarkable MS-66, the finest known.

Rarity in Proof: Breen (1988): "At least three 1855-S Proofs were made for presentation purposes, celebrating the inception of the denomination. One of these went from Superintendent Birdsall to Snowden, who placed it in the Mint Cabinet Collection. The other two appeared at auction in the 1950s." The Proofs lack drapery at the elbow.

Hoards: No old-time hoards have been reported. However, from 1976 to 1983 a numismatic accumulation was formed by Roy Pohler of Cameron, Louisiana. This group contained 87 1855-S half dollars, as reported by Randy Wiley after he examined the cache in April 1986. The finest was a solitary Mint State coin, followed by four at the AU level, nine EF coins, 14 VF, 17 Fine, 27 VG, and 15 Abt. Good to Good.[1]

Dies and die varieties: Six obverse dies and four reverses were shipped to San Francisco for this coinage, but not all were used (Wiley and Bugert, 1993, state that four obverses and three reverses are known). The reverse dies, undated, could be used in any later year. • All specimens have a large (1.65 mm.) mintmark. • The size of mintmarks on half dollars of the 1850s and 1860s was noticed at length by Augustus G. Heaton in his 1893 treatise, *Mint Marks*.

Notes: The Liberty Seated design was used for this and other half dollars in the present study. The motif was created by Christian Gobrecht in 1836 for the silver dollar and later used on half dollars beginning in 1839. Arrowheads are at each side of the date, a feature used on all denominations from the half dime to the half dollar in 1855, but discontinued in 1856.

1855-S $3 Gold

1855-S $3 gold, the first year of issue of the $3 coin at the San Francisco Mint. This unusual denomination must have been popular in West Coast commerce, for nearly all in existence today show signs of wear, often extensive. (Rarities Sale, August 1995)

Mintage: 6,600.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1855-S is very scarce in all grades due to the low mintage. When seen, a typical coin is apt to be VF or EF. AU coins are very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: In his 1988 *Encyclopedia*, Walter Breen said that two or three Mint State 1855-S $3 pieces were known to him. I see no reason to change that estimate today.

Rarity in Proof: Two Proofs are known to exist (Breen). The occasion of striking was probably to commemorate the first coin of this denomination made at the San Francisco Mint.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Three obverses and seven reverse dies (the reverse having the date) were shipped, but only one die variety of business strike is known. Slanting 5's in date. • Large S mintmark.

Notes: The $3 denomination introduced this year featured the design of James B. Longacre. Such coins had been made in Philadelphia, Dahlonega, and New Orleans the year before (none were ever made at Charlotte). The Indian Princess on the obverse is similar to that used on the Type III gold dollar (first used in Philadelphia in 1856 and first employed in San Francisco in 1857).

Notes concerning all San Francisco Mint $3 pieces 1855-1860: In 1893, Augustus G. Heaton, in *Mint Marks*, noted: "At San Francisco there were issues in 1855, '56, '57, and '60. All are very rare except the 1856, which, however, is interesting from having two varieties, a large and a small S."

In 1909, Edgar H. Adams, in *Adams' Official Premium List of United States, Private and Territorial Gold Coins*, studied the availability of such coins in recent auctions. For San Francisco Mint $3 pieces he noted these grades: 1855-S (Fine, H.P. Smith sale, 1906; VF, Wilcox sale, 1901); 1856-S (VG, Smith sale, 1906; VF, Wilcox sale, 1901); 1857-S (VF, Smith sale, 1906; similarly, Wilcox sale, 1901); and 1860-S (EF, Smith sale, 1906; Fine, Gschwend sale, 1908). In contrast, most Philadelphia Mint coins in the survey were Uncirculated.

1855-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 61,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1855-S $5 is slightly scarce today. When seen, examples are apt to be in grades such as VF and EF, with an occasional AU, the latter being rare.

Rarity in Mint State: Mint State coins are great rarities, and possibly only two or three exist, these being near the MS-60 or MS-61 level.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Seven obverse dies and three reverse dies were sent from Philadelphia to San Francisco. • All have large S mintmark.

1855-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 9,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1855-S $10 is rare in any and all grades, as the low mintage of 9,000 would suggest. When seen, the 1855-S is apt to be VF or possibly EF. AU coins are very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six obverse dies were sent to San Francisco for this coinage, but most remained unused. Reverses with medium S (1.3 mm.) were on hand from 1854.

Notes: This date begins a run of San Francisco Mint $10 coins which are scarce in all grades, very rare AU, and of legendary rarity or in some instances even nonexistent in Mint State. If recoveries from the *S.S. Central America* yield any high grade examples, some of the preceding comments will have to be modified.

1 Randall Wiley and Bill Bugert, *The Complete Guide to Liberty Seated Half Dollars*, 1993, p.112. Separately, James C. Gray, letter, August 1996, reported: "I got the pick of that hoard. The coin that I selected was a pristine, almost fully struck, EF-45. A couple of pieces had a slightly higher technical grade but were not nearly as choice as this piece."

1855-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 879,675.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1855-S $20 is fairly plentiful and is usually seen in VF or EF preservation. AU coins are quite scarce. Considerable attention was paid to the AU-58 to MS-60 quality of the Norweb Collection coin (1987), earlier from the Peake Collection (New Netherlands Coin Co., 1955), as it was an original surface (not "seawater") piece with frosty lustre.

Rarity in Mint State: In Mint State with lustrous, frosty surfaces the 1855-S is very rare, and only a few have ever come on the market. In addition, probably over 100 "seawater Uncirculated" coins exist with deeply etched surfaces.

Hoards: A hoard of over 3,500 gold coins of various dates found by two boys in a cellar at 132 South Eden Street, Baltimore, on August 31, 1934 (plus a second find soon thereafter), included a dozen pieces of the 1855-S $20, probably in high grades, for the hoard seems to have been hidden circa 1856 (this being the latest date). These pieces were later sold at auction for about twice face value, and no track was kept of them.[1]

In the early 1970s hundreds of "seawater Uncirculated" 1855-S and 1856-S $20 coins came on the market, the 1856-S being the more plentiful of the two dates. These coins display great sharpness of detail, but mint lustre is no longer present. Sold through WorldWide Coin Investments of Atlanta, they were said by the firm's supplier to have been from a "sunken treasure ship off the coast of Florida."[2] Today, these coins are still seen with some frequency.

Dies and die varieties: 12 obverse dies and six reverse dies were sent to San Francisco, but not all were used. • All specimens seen have a medium S (1.3 mm.) mintmark. • Reverses of the $20 issues 1854-1857 exist with the A (STATES) either normal or broken.

Gold bars:

$3,270,595 value in unparted bars; $88,782 in fine bars.

Mints Use California Gold

1855: Total California gold metal production: $55,485,395; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $20,860,437.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $2,634,298. This figure represents a sharp drop from preceding years and is explained by metal being sent instead to the New York City Assay Office. After this time amounts sent to Philadelphia would remain small.

Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $5,818.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $47,429.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $411,517.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $25,025,896.

Snowden's Commentary

The 1855 *Mint Report* included the suggestion by Director James Ross Snowden that with the exception of San Francisco, it might be desirable "to coin all the gold that is likely to be offered in pieces of five dollars or less." This would merit the employment of "a very remarkable machine lately invented for the final adjustment of the weight of the individual planchets." This device, made in Paris, was "adapted to the half eagle only." Such a machine was intended to eliminate the services of dozens of people in the Mint and its branches, such work being done by ladies who sat at long benches and weighed and filed planchets by hand.

In the same report Snowden stated that large bars of gold were the most economical way to process this metal for export and for trade:

> Before the act of Congress authorizing the issuing of gold in stamped bars, there was, it is true, a necessity for the issue of large coins, as well as to meet the demands for shipment to Europe as, in some measure, to relieve the pressure upon the Mint. There was no kind of propriety in going through the manipulations and bearing the expense of making small gold coins to be directly melted down in foreign mints or refineries. But since the important change in our mint laws, a distinction has been made to meet the demands of trade, by which gold intended for exportation is cast into fine bars, whilst that which is needed for home currency is converted into coin.
>
> If we look to the example of the wealthiest and most civilized nations of the globe we shall find that their largest gold coin, to speak in a general way, does not exceed our half eagle in size. It would no longer be an embarrassment to the principal mint [Philadelphia], nor to the branches, except perhaps the branch at San Francisco (and to that institution these views are not intended particularly to apply), to coin all the gold that is likely to be offered in pieces of $5 or less.
>
> The manufacture of fine bars at the Assay Office in New York, and the coinage of the branch mint at San Francisco, have so divided the work upon gold bullion as to remove all apprehension of difficulty or delay. It is not by any means assumed that the coinage of the eagle and double eagle should be discontinued. On the contrary, they will be indispensable at San Francisco; and they may, in some emergencies, be required at Philadelphia and at New Orleans. But, as a general rule adapted to the principal mint and to the branches in the Atlantic States,[3] it is believed that the time has come to return to the smaller denominations of gold coin, issuing almost the whole in pieces not larger than the half eagle.

Browne Observes Mint Operations

In 1855, J. Ross Browne, a representative of the Treasury Department as well as a writer and, later, a federal

[1] For the story of the hoard and an inventory see Bowers, *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997.

[2] WorldWide Coin Investments (John B. Hamrick, Jr., and Warren E. Tucker) attracted a great deal of attention in the early 1970s by purchasing such formidable rarities as the 1913 Liberty Head nickel, 1894-S dime, and 1804 silver dollar. The firm was the first professional rare coin dealership to automate its accounts and records by using a computer; in this case, one made by Burroughs. Stock in WorldWide was publicly traded (as were the stocks of several other rare coin companies in the 1970s including Coin Convestors and Schulman Coin & Mint).

[3] The reference is erroneous as the "branches in the Atlantic States" were but two—Dahlonega (Georgia) and Charlotte (North Carolina)—and neither of these mints had ever produced any coins above the $5 denomination.

Indian agent, visited the Mint to make observations and investigations concerning the processes, security procedures, and related activities. Among other things, he learned that Superintendent L.A. Birdsall had a financial interest at one time in a private firm that supplied parting acids to the Mint, the purchase of such acids being one of the highest outside expenses. However, by the time that Browne discovered the connection, apparently it had ended. Certain Mint employees and officials were constantly involved in private business activities, some of which seemed to conflict with their official duties.

Activity in the Private Sector

Perhaps in response to the ignored petition made in March 1854 that the San Francisco Mint be allowed to strike $50 gold coins, which by that time had become scarce in the channels of commerce, in 1855 the private firm of Wass, Molitor & Co. filled the need by producing its own $50 "slugs" of a new, round shape, possibly to permit quick differentiation from the former octagonal coins made by Augustus Humbert and the United States Assay Office of Gold. These coins, made to the Mint standard of 900/1000th fine, proved to be very popular and were used widely, especially in shipments of gold by sea to distant places. The *Sacramento Daily Union* on April 30, 1855, noted:

> Col. Pardee of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express has exhibited to us the new fifty dollar piece, which in a great measure is destined to supplant the old fashioned octagon slug now in circulation. This coin is circular, almost entirely destitute of ornament, and plain as a maiden's countenance who has breathed the air of 50 summers. At the outer edge of one side are the words "Wass, Molitor & Co., San Francisco," enclosing in the center of the coin the figures "900" and abbreviated word "Thous." with the figures "50" underneath and the word "Dollars" below the latter figures. On the reverse of the coin is a common head of Liberty and the figures "1855." The coin certainly has no pretensions to beauty; nevertheless we would not like to refuse when to break with old friends.

On May 1, 1855 the *Alta California* noted that about $1.5 million was the largest coinage per month from the San Francisco Mint, whereas Kellogg & Co. for many weeks made from $60,000 to $80,000 worth of coins per *day*. While the reporting seems to indicate that the federal Mint was lagging, as the Mint worked six days per week, or about 26 or so days per average month, the mint figure can be translated to about $58,000 per day, seemingly quite comparable.

In the same vein the *Alta California* reported on May 16, 1855 that:

> Wass, Molitor & Co. have commenced issuing their fifty and twenty dollar pieces at the rate of $38,000 per day. The coin is above the United States standard and is confidently received throughout the state.

However, 1855 would be the last year that the San Francisco Mint had local competition in coinage. In later times, activities in the private sector were limited to assaying, refining, and the issuing of bars.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1856)

History and Commentary

In 1856 the silver dime was added to denominations struck at the San Francisco Mint. There had been relatively little call for such a coin, as most business was transacted in sums of 25 or more. As demand would dictate, later mintages of dimes were relatively small. The San Francisco Mint seemed to hit its stride with gold issues, and production figures were generous.

Working conditions at the San Francisco Mint were cramped and poorly ventilated, and many complaints arose. In September 1856 the facility underwent repairs, during which time coinage was suspended. For a time, treasure shipped to the East consisted primarily of gold bars made by private assayers and refiners, as double eagles were not available.[2]

1856-S 10c Silver (Dime)

1856-S dime, the first issue of this silver denomination from the San Francisco Mint. The design features Liberty Seated with obverse stars; UNITED STATES OF AMERICA is on the reverse. This style was continued through 1860. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Mintage: 70,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: In worn grades the 1856-S dime is scarce not only for its low mintage, but also because none were specifically set aside by collectors. Specialist Brian Greer considers the 1856-S to be second only to the 1859-S in terms of rarity among with-stars dimes of the 1856-1860 years. Most worn coins are in lower grades such as G, VG, or Fine. EF and AU examples are rare.

Rarity in Mint State: The estimated population of Mint State coins is five to 10 pieces, among which are several gems. The Shahabian Collection (1996) featured an MS-65 (PCGS).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Although six obverse dies and two reverse dies were on hand in 1856, not all were used. • All 1856-S dimes have the Small Date style; in contrast Philadelphia Mint dimes are known with Small Date (usual) and Large Date (scarce).

[1] Today, numismatists consider the portrait side to be the *obverse*. The head is of Miss Liberty, a copy of the federal design. However, the Liberty Head punch was intended for the $20 denomination. Used on the $50 denomination the portrait seems slightly small in relation to the surrounding field, yielding a pleasing cameo like appearance.

[2] Dwight L. Clarke, *William Tecumseh Sherman: Gold Rush Banker*, 1969, p. 237.

Notes: The design is of the Liberty Seated type with 13 stars on obverse and with UNITED STATES OF AMERICA on the reverse, the motif introduced in 1838 and continued in use at the San Francisco Mint through and including 1860.

1856-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

1856-S quarter dollar. The Liberty Seated design is similar to that used in 1855, but without arrowheads at the date. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Mintage: 286,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1856-S quarter dollar is scarce today in well-worn grades (the preservation usually seen) and is exceedingly rare in EF or AU.

Rarity in Mint State: The number of known Mint State coins can be counted on the fingers of one hand, but does include at least one MS-65.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 12 pairs of dies were shipped to San Francisco for this coinage, but most were not used. Larry Briggs has identified five different obverse and reverse dies actually employed. • The 1856-S quarter is usually seen with a large S (1.4 mm.) mintmark. • A curious variety exists, the large S over small S; a small (about 1.0 mm. high and 0.6 mm. wide) mintmark protrudes from the right side of the larger S. The small S variety is not known on its own, but just as an erroneous entry on this die.

Notes: Grade for grade, the 1856-S quarter dollar is much more elusive than the 1855-S, but it sells for only little more, as the 1855-S has the added appeal of being the first year of the denomination as well as the only San Francisco Mint quarter dollar of its era with arrows at the date.

1856-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

1856-S half dollar. The Liberty Seated design is similar to that used in 1855, but without arrowheads at the date. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Mintage: 211,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Half dollars of this date and mint are scarce today in all grades. Most examples show extensive wear and are Good to VG. Grades such as EF or AU are seldom encountered. It is relevant to note that both the Norweb Collection and the Pryor Collection coins were AU, the finest that each owner could locate over a long period of years, despite having virtually unlimited checkbooks and unbounded acquisition desires. James Bennett Pryor spent about two decades on the search!

Rarity in Mint State: The 1856-S half dollar is a major rarity at this level, with only a handful of pieces accounted for. Years may elapse between market offerings. The Eliasberg Collection gem (MS-65) is an anomaly.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 12 pairs of dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint, a very large amount anticipating a great coinage, but Wiley and Bugert (1993) identify only five obverse dies and two reverse dies that were actually used. • Large S (1.65 mm.) mintmark.

Silver bars: $23,609 value.

Most silver was obtained by refining it from unparted gold, although some Mexican silver was deposited.

1856-S $1 Gold Dollar

1856-S $1 gold. This issue is of the so-called Type II motif with Miss Liberty in the form of an Indian princess with plumed headdress. By 1856 this design had been discontinued at the other mints. (Pennsylvania Cabinet)

Mintage: 24,600.

Rarity in circulated grades: In worn grades the 1856-S gold dollar is somewhat scarce, but enough exist to fill the demand for them. Typical grades are VF and the occasional EF. AU coins are very elusive.

Rarity in Mint State: Only a few 1856-S gold dollars exist at even the MS-60 level, and any coin MS-65 or above is a major rarity.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Die pairs for this coinage seem to have been made up in late 1855 with the 1856 date, and perhaps some were shipped then. In any event, six pairs were sent from Philadelphia to San Francisco in March 1856. • All known specimens have an upright 5 in the date and a small S mintmark.

Notes: The 1856-S gold dollar coinage is numismatically curious and significant, as the design is the Type II style used at the other mints only in 1854-1855. By 1856 the other mints had replaced it with the Type III motif. However, dies for San Francisco were shipped before this changeover was made. Thus among 1856-dated gold dollars those struck at Philadelphia and Dahlonega (1856-D) are of the new Type III motif, while the 1856-S is of the anachronistic Type II.

1856-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 72,120.

Rarity in circulated grades: Repeating a familiar scenario, the gold $2.50 is readily available but hardly common in worn grades such as VF, which is about par, or the occasional EF or AU.[1]

[1] As a long-time dealer in gold coins [illegible] that VF is the standard grade for a San Francisco Mint quarter eagle of this era. When a collection comes to hand, this is the grade expected. On the other hand, Philadelphia Mint coins of the same time period are [illegible] in grades and are of a higher average preservation.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1856-S is a prime rarity in Mint State, and probably no more than six to 10 specimens are presently known in collections. Most such pieces are in lower Mint State numerical ranges. As is the case with virtually all San Francisco Mint quarter eagles (possible *S.S. Central America* finds excepted), this is a *condition rarity*.

Hoards: None reported.

Dies and die varieties: 10 1856-dated obverses and six reverses were sent from the die shop at the Philadelphia Mint to San Francisco from November 1855 to March 1856.

1856-S $3 Gold

Mintage: 34,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1856-S $3 gold piece is readily available in worn grades such as VF (in particular) and EF, but is very scarce at the AU level. This issue seems to have circulated very extensively and intensively.

Rarity in Mint State: Although at least a dozen examples have been described as Mint State in catalogues over the years, in modern times specimens have been very elusive, and only a small handful have been certified at this level. At least one high quality Mint State coin was found in 1989 among coins salvaged from the *S.S. Central America*.[1] If the same ship yields a significant number of others, then the 1856-S will become collectible in Mint State.

Hoards: None reported

Dies and die varieties: Ten pairs of 1856-dated dies were shipped from Philadelphia to the San Francisco Mint for this coinage including four pairs in November 1855, two in December 1855 and four in March 1856, most remaining unused. • Large, medium, and small S mintmark varieties, the Medium S being the size usually seen.

1856-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 105,100.

Rarity in circulated grades: Repeating a familiar scenario, the 1856-S gold $5 is readily available in worn grades such as VF or EF but becomes scarce at the AU level. EF seems to be about average for pieces in major collections, this being a slightly lower average grade than for its little sister, the quarter eagle.

Rarity in Mint State: Only a handful of Mint State coins have been reported. Only a few exist among the S.S. Central America gold, apparently.

Hoards: None reported.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies and two reverse dies were received in 1855 for the 1856 coinage. Six additional obverse and four additional reverse dies were shipped in March 1856. • Large mintmark (1.7 mm) as on 1854 and 1855 specimens, is rare. Presumably the 1856-S reverse die received in 1855 was used for the large S variety. • Medium S (1.3 mm) mintmark is the style usually seen.

1856-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 68,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1856-S gold $10 is scarce in worn grades such as VF or EF, and is very rare at the AU level.

Rarity in Mint State: Commenting on this 1988 study of the denomination, David W. Akers noted: "No specimen is known in Uncirculated condition, and I have not seen or heard of one that was even close." Since then, one or two have been reported, grading MS-60 more or less. At least one high quality Mint State coin was found in 1989 among coins salvaged from the *S.S. Central America*.[2]

Hoards: None reported.

Dies and die varieties: Nine 1856-dated obverse dies and two reverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in December 1855. Also, leftover reverses were on hand. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark variety is very rare. • Medium S (1.3 mm.) mintmark is the norm.

Notes: Per Breen (1988) the mintage of 68,000 pieces (the total he gives) was accomplished as follows: 14,000 [Breen's error, should be 10,000] pieces in January, 55,500 in September, and 2,500 in December.[3] These figures, however, add up to 72,000, not 68,000.

1856-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 1,189,750.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1856-S $20 is readily available in VF and EF grades. In AU the coins are scarce, except for hoard pieces.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1856-S is fairly scarce in lustrous Mint State, but historically this issue has come on the market more often than any other S-Mint $20 of the era under study (1854-1865). These comments do not pertain to "seawater Uncirculated" coins (see Hoards below), as these are etched. Today, excluding the *S.S. Central America* recovery coins, probably somewhere between 50 and 100 non-impaired Mint State coins are known.

Hoards: The 1934 Baltimore hoard (see 1855-S $20) also included 23 examples of 1856-S, grades unknown, but probably Mint State or close to it, as the latest-dated coins in the group were dated this year.

In 1973 "several choice Uncirculated" 1856-S double eagles were found in a northern California estate (Breen 1988). This estate, name of owner not identified, also yielded a handful of other dates in Mint State.

In the early 1970s, hundreds of "seawater Uncirculated" 1855-S and 1856-S $20 coins came on the market, with the 1856-S coins being the more plentiful. Coins from this cache have sharp design detail, but the lustre is no longer present. Marketed through WorldWide Coin Investments of Atlanta, they were said to have come from a "treasure ship" sunk off the Atlantic Coast. A 1973 advertisement by the writer's firm told of the tail end of the group: "TREASURE GOLD! 1856-S Double Eagles. We have remaining from a rather remarkable purchase, 18 gold coins which were recovered from a sunken treasure ship off the coast of Florida. The group consists of 1856-S double eagles. Each coin is full, sharp Uncirculated grade, with a matte-like surface from immersion in sea water for over 110 years...."

In addition to the foregoing, many high-quality 1856-S $20 coins were raised from the long-lost wreck of the *S.S. Central America* by the Columbus-America Discovery Group beginning in 1989. Such pieces are mostly highly brilliant and lustrous and of choice and gem quality.

[1] Walter Breen, "The S.S. *Central America*, Tragedy and Treasure," *The Numismatist*, July 1990.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] The Breen text contained a typographical error; the correct figure for January is 10,000 (cf. R.W. Julian, letter, January 19, 1999, based upon Julian's examination of Mint records).

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded five examples of the 1856-S in grades from EF to Mint State.

Dies and die varieties: Double eagle production continued its stride in 1856, and 17 obverse and 10 reverse dies were shipped to San Francisco for use to strike this denomination. Probably, some obverses remained unused and were destroyed. • Medium S (1.3 mm.) mintmark. • Reverses of the $20 issues 1854-1857 exist with the A (STATES) either normal or broken.

Gold bars:

$3,047,001 value in unparted (natural gold) bars; $122,137 in fine bars.

Mints Use California Gold

1856: Total California gold metal production: $57,509,411; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $29,209,218.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $1,440,134.

Charlotte Mint use of California gold: $15,237.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $31,467.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $283,345.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $16,529,009.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1857)

History and Commentary

The 10 denomination, introduced in 1856, did not make an encore this year, indicative of the public indifference to denominations below 25. However, coinage of dimes would continue in later times.

Production of gold denominations was strong, with special focus on the popular $20 double eagle, always in demand for large shipments and export. No silver or gold bars are listed in the *Mint Report* for this year. However, there was a continuing demand for bars for shipment to distant ports, and several private assayers filled the need. So long as a private California refiner was of good reputation and could be relied upon, bars of that firm were often preferable to a larger quantity of coins, as large bars could be more easily inventoried. As either coins or bars would be melted abroad, coins held no special cachet.

On June 30, 1857, Charles H. Hempstead was named to the post of superintendent of the San Francisco Mint. He continued in the position until June 29, 1861.

1857-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 82,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Quarter dollars of 1857-S are very scarce in worn grades, although their rarity is somewhat overlooked. The typical coin is apt to show extensive wear and grade G or VG. Any coin grading as high as EF or AU is very hard to find.

Rarity in Mint State: Mint State examples are exceedingly elusive. Coins grading MS-64 or higher are great rarities, and not even the finest specialized collections are apt to include examples, an exception being the MS-66 Eliasberg Collection specimen.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Larry Briggs identified two obverse and three reverses used this year. • Nearly always seen with large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark. • The medium S (1.3 mm.) mintmark variety is very rare.

1857-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 158,000.

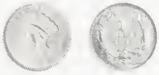
Rarity in circulated grades: Despite a relatively large mintage, the 1857-S half dollar is considered to be scarce in all grades. Grade for grade it handily eclipses its better known cousin, the 1855-S.

Rarity in Mint State: Probably between five and 10 Mint State coins exist, most of which are in lower numerical categories. The Pryor Collection specimen (1996), a remarkable MS-65, is possibly the finest known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1857 dated obverse dies along with reverse dies were shipped on December 4, 1856, and were received on January 5, 1857. Wiley and Bugert (1993) have identified four obverses and three reverses that were used, the obverses constituting complete utilization of those on hand. • One obverse has what Wiley and Bugert (1993) describe as "the left edge of the serif and base of an earlier punched 1 in the field to the left of the prominent date." • Large S (1.65 mm.) mintmark on most. • Medium S (1.4 mm.) variety is scarce.

1857-S $1 Gold Dollar



1857-S $1 gold. This represents the first use at the San Francisco Mint of the Type III gold dollar design, although this motif had been used at other mints in 1856 (Bowers and Merena archives)

Mintage: 10,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1857-S gold dollar is scarce in any grade and is especially hard to find EF or AU, more so than generally realized.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1857-S is a major rarity, with fewer than five believed to exist. None have been seen at the gem (MS-65) level.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Two minor die varieties are known, both with medium S mintmark.

Notes: In 1856 at the Philadelphia Mint the gold dollar was modified again to the Type III style, but the new motif was not employed in San Francisco until 1857. The diameter remained the same as that adopted with the Type II style introduced in 1854. On the obverse Miss Liberty was restyled to a larger, lower relief image to permit metal to flow into the die

recesses more easily. The new obverse style is, in effect, a small version of the Indian Princess design used on the $3 gold coins beginning at the inception of that denomination in 1854 (and first struck in San Francisco in 1855).

1857-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 69,200.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1857-S quarter eagle is quite scarce in all grades. VF and EF coins are about the norm, with AU pieces being noticeably fewer.

Rarity in Mint State: The historical record reveals the existence of only a small handful of pieces described as Mint State over the years. The *S.S. Central America* recoveries (see below) will change that.

Hoards: The wreck of the *S.S. Central America,* discovered in 1989, yielded an unknown number of gem specimens.[1] Numismatists can be thankful for the opportunity to eventually acquire such pieces, as otherwise the variety would be essentially unobtainable in Mint State.

Dies and die varieties: Minor variations exist in date and mintmark placement.

Notes: Most specimens are somewhat flatly struck.

The mintage figure includes 1,200 coins struck on January 19, *1858.* There is no known way of distinguishing the 1857-S quarter eagles actually struck in 1858. There is no such thing as an 1858-dated San Francisco Mint quarter eagle (although 10 obverse dies were on hand at the Mint), thus effectively [illegible] these to be 1857-S unless at some future date an authentic 1858-S is discovered, and what a fantastic find this would be!

1857-S $3 Gold

Mintage: 14,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1857-S is very scarce in all [illegible] VF is the norm, with an occasional EF and a very occasional AU appearing on the market. The best [illegible]

Rarity in Mint State: [illegible] as Mint State [illegible] A gem [illegible] *Central* [illegible]

Hoards: [illegible]

Dies and die varieties: [illegible]

1857-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 87,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: [illegible]

Rarity in Mint State: [illegible]

Hoards: [illegible] coins first seen] of gem 1857-S eagles, half eagles and quarter eagles."[2]

Dies and die varieties: Large (1.7 mm.) and small S ([illegible] mm.) mintmarks.

1857-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 26,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1857-S $10 is slightly scarce in grades such as VF and EF, but very rare in AU.

Rarity in Mint State: The historical record demonstrates that very few 1857-S eagles have been called Mint State over the years. As of autumn 1998 not a single 1857-S had been certified on the long side of AU-55! Except for the following information given under Hoards, this is an almost impossible coin to obtain in Mint State.

Hoards: In the 1980s the wreck of the *S.S. Central America* yielded some gem specimens.[4] Walter Breen was given the opportunity to see some of the coins and commented: "There are far smaller numbers [than the hundreds of 1857-S $20 coins first seen] of gem 1857-S eagles, half eagles and quarter eagles. Eagles shown me are the low date variety (*Encyclopedia* 6927)...."

Dies and die varieties: Obverse dies are known with the date centered between the bust and the dentils and with the date low. Medium S (1.2 mm.) mintmark.

1857-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 970,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: From the standpoint of 1857-S $20 pieces offered in past years, VF and EF coins have been common and AU coins have been seen now and then, but are scarce.

Rarity in Mint State: Prior to the *S.S. Central America* discovery (see *Hoards* below) the 1857-S ranked as a fairly elusive coin in Mint State, with perhaps 25 to 50 known to exist. A few of these were discovered in a northern California estate in 1973 (Breen 1988). Today, the *Central America* hoard has placed the 1857-S as the most plentiful early S-Mint $20 at this condition level.

Hoards: Over 1,000 choice and gem Mint State 1857-S $20 pieces have been found in the wreck of the *S.S. Central America.* Walter Breen examined some of the recovered pieces and subsequently commented:[5] "Most of the coins are Mint State 1857-S double eagles of several varieties. The gem Uncirculated 1857-S's shown me did not include any large S coins, but there were plenty of medium S's with normal A, without or with obviously repunched 18, hitherto unknown, or broken A. One of the [normal A varieties] has an amazing, deep mirrorlike Proof surface. Many came up in oddly shaped encrusted groups. One of the more remarkable finds was the 'coin tower,' an encrusted stack of more than 300 Mint State double eagles. These originally filled a wooden box, which rotted away. The gold coins and ingots were thereafter long soaked in a buffered (pH 7.2) mixed sodium salts solution to lift off iron oxide

1 Walter Breen, "The S.S. *Central America.* Tragedy and Treasure," *The Numismatist,* July 1990.
2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.*
5 *Ibid.*

encrustations; this treatment did not affect the gold or its alloy, leaving pristine surfaces, without any trace of visible evidence of cleaning."

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded eight examples in grades from EF to AU.

Hoards and the Market (Historical Perspective): Concerning the dispersal of hoards and treasures, often this will focus great public attention on a numismatic area, and interest of buyers will *increase* sharply. The great example of this is the release of *hundreds of millions* of long-stored Morgan (dated 1878-1921) and Peace (1921-1935) silver dollars by the Treasury Department from November 1962 until the supply ran out in March 1964. Silver dollars, once merely a numismatic sideline, became the prime focus of desire for many numismatists. Today, of the nearly 125 different dates and mintmarks of silver dollars minted from 1878 to 1935, only three varieties (1898-O, 1903-O, and 1904-O) are less expensive now than they were in 1962. Other coins have risen dramatically, some multiplying in value 1000% or even far more.

It is the writer's view that when high-grade American gold coins are found as part of a treasure, especially if they are early coins of varieties seldom seen, thousands of collectors who had paid no attention to such issues will become fascinated with them, thus greatly broadening the market.

Dies and die varieties: Medium S (1.3 mm.) and Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmarks, the latter rare. • Reverses of the $20 issues 1854-1857 exist with the A (STATES) either normal or broken.

Notes: As is the case with other San Francisco Mint double eagles of the era, the 1857-S was a workhorse coin of the year, the denomination of choice for bankers and for the export trade. Those aboard the *Central America* were on their way to New York City.

Mints Use California Gold

1857: Total California gold metal production: $43,628,172; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $12,526,827.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $565,567.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $6,498.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $129,328.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $9,899,957.

Snowden Comments about Gold Bars

In his *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*, dated October 12, 1857, and covering the fiscal year ended June 30, Director James Ross Snowden commented that gold bars were preferred to coins for shipment (by sea):

> I deem it proper to call your attention to the propriety of so amending the laws relative to coinage as to provide that where fine gold bars are made and paid to depositors of bullion at the mint, and its branches, and at the assay office, that in addition to the charges now made for parting the metals, and for toughening, there shall be a charge of one half of one percent to be paid into the Treasury of the United States, as is provided by the sixth section of the Act of February 21, 1853. That section authorized this charge as well upon bars as coin, but the Act of March 3, 1853, makes it apply only to coin. There seems no valid reason why this discrimination should be made in favor of fine bars, which are used for transportation abroad instead of coin.

Incidents at the Mint

Historian Bancroft described incidents at the San Francisco Mint in 1857:[1]

> The San Francisco branch mint in 1857 was robbed of ten or fifteen thousand dollars by the coiner's head cutter, William Bein, a Belgian. Bein was arrested on the 19th of August, confessed to the crime, and gave up to the United States most of the proceeds of his crime. The gold taken was in blanks and clippings, and the circumstance which aroused suspicion was the deposit by a banking house, of certain small, rough gold bars of standard mint value.[2] Bein was promptly convicted.
>
> Others implicated in Mint swindles were arrested shortly thereafter. Isador and Henry [Hermann] Blum, Montgomery Street clothing merchants, were brought up on a charge of conspiracy against Janos (or John) A. Szabo,[3] in attempting to extort money from him, believing him to be a Mint defaulter and in their power.
>
> Augustin Haraszthy, melter and refiner of the San Francisco Branch Mint, on the 19th of September was indicted by the United States grand jury upon a charge of embezzling gold to the amount of $151,550. He was arrested and released on $20,000 bail.

Col. Agostin (anglicized to Augustin) Haraszthy was one of the more interesting characters to cross the portals of the San Francisco Mint. Born in Futtak in southern Hungary in 1812, he served in the Royal Guard under Austrian Emperor Ferdinand. In 1840 he came to America, settling in what later became Wisconsin, where he cofounded Town Haraszthy, later known as Sauk City. After staying in America for two years he returned home to bring back his family. In 1849 Haraszthy, his family, and several friends went to California via the Santa Fe Trail. He entered politics, was elected as a sheriff, and in 1852 was elected as a state assemblyman. Early in that year he acquired land in northern California for the growing of grapes and, later, developed additional acreage at Crystal Springs.

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, p. [illegible]

[2] These would have been of 900/1000th fineness, a standard used at the Mint but only occasionally seen in commerce. [illegible] produced imported [illegible] natural gold and alloy [illegible] on them, varying according to the source of the metal [illegible] 900 fine. There was no reason [illegible] lower fineness native gold up to the Mint requirement.

[3] Szabo, age 29, had come to California in [illegible] the U.S. Coast Survey. He was [illegible] San Francisco Mint in October 1855. Szabo had given the Blums [illegible] deposit at the Mint [illegible] "money laundering" [illegible] name from the transaction. [illegible] San Francisco Mint [illegible] to have been very [illegible] during the 1850s and [illegible] papers contain numerous accounts [illegible] relating to such problems. Apparently [illegible] the superintendent's office was [illegible] for him and his assistants within Mint walls.

The multi-talented Haraszthy had joined the staff of the San Francisco Mint as assayer at its beginning in 1854.[1] By 1856 Haraszthy also had a private assaying firm, Haraszthy, Uznay & Co., trading as the Eureka Gold and Silver Refinery.[2] After he was discharged on April 23, 1857, he retired on May 29 from the Eureka Refinery, which remained in business under the direction of his former associates using the new trade style of Justh, Hunter & Uznay.[3]

The 1857 indictment became a *cause célèbre,* and after four years of wrangling in court, in a jury deliberation on March 2, 1861, that lasted all of 10 minutes, the accusation was found to have no merit.[4] It was generally believed that shortfalls earlier attributed to Haraszthy were, in fact, caused by gold particles going up the Mint chimney during the refining process and by inaccuracies in calculations by the Mint assayers including the aforementioned eccentric, perhaps crazy Conrad Wiegand. Large quantities of gold residue were found in the Mint flues and on neighboring roof tops, lending credence to the defense.

After his stint in San Francisco as an assayer in the mid-1850s, Haraszthy's interest in viticulture increased, and by 1863 he supervised 6,000 acres. The State of California commissioned him to go to Europe to study the growing of grapes and production of wine, an effort for which he was never reimbursed. His efforts in promoting two grapes, the Muscat of Alexandria and the Zinfandel, led his reputation as the "father of California wine." After the Civil War he had several financial reverses. He owned property in Central America, and it was said that his death on July 6, 1869, occurred in that region when he fell into a stream infested with crocodiles.

Silver in Demand

By February 1857, in consequence of the rise of silver on international markets, the *Philadelphia* Mint was *paying* $1.05 to $1.06 each for the silver dollars of Spain (pillar type), Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru, the latter dated prior to recent changes.[5] In San Francisco, silver dollars of Spanish American countries were in strong demand at bullion brokers as they were an absolute necessity to pay merchants in China for tea, silk, and other goods brought to the West Coast, and such coins continued to sell at a premium in terms of gold. San Francisco Mint half dollars continued to be shipped in quantity to China, where most were melted.

The S.S. *Central America*

On August 20, 1857, the S.S. *Sonora* departed San Francisco with a contingent of passengers and well over $1,200,000 in "treasure" for the account of over two dozen banks and commercial interests, plus, of course undeclared gold carried by the travelers, amounting in the aggregate to $1,600,000 or even far more. Those packing the gold aboard might not have been aware of, or had forgotten, a curious caper a few years earlier aboard the *Sonora.* It seems that in December 1854 there had been an on-board theft of treasure by the crew, and it was reported that six $20 gold coins had been hidden by the boatswain, an additional $300 to $400 value of coins was found sewn up in one of the beds, and other coins were found elsewhere, these having been swiped from 96 boxes of treasure, each of which contained $15,000 to $25,000 in gold, and from two separate bags of coins, one containing $15,000 and the "other a few thousand dollars."[6]

On the subsequent late summer 1857 voyage of the *Sonora* to the south, upon arrival in Panama, most of the passengers and cargo were transferred across the isthmus by railroad to Aspinwall, and then aboard the *S.S. Central America* bound for New York City. In the days before accurate weather forecasting the sidewheel steamer encountered an unexpected hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean off North Carolina, and on September 12 she went to the bottom carrying over 300 travelers to a watery grave.

Over 130 years later, in October 1989, the Columbus-America Discovery Group, formed in 1985 by Thomas G. Thompson, Robert Evans, and Barry Schatz and backed by private investors, located the wreck in about 8,000 feet of water. Brought to the surface during the next several years was a vast and amazing quantity of gold coins including well over 1,000 1857-S double eagles and a selection of other issues including an 1850 Dubosq & Co. $10, an 1855 Wass, Molitor & Co. $50, multiple octagonal $50 "slugs" from Augustus Humbert and the U.S. Assay Office of Gold, and more.

Also found on the sea bottom were many gold bars bearing the imprint of private assayers in California, such as Blake & Co. (Sacramento); Harris Marchand & Co. (Harvey Harris and D. Marchand, with offices in Sacramento

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[1] His father, known as Gen. Charles Haraszthy, was on the Mint staff in the same era and served for a time as melter and refiner.

[2] The firm consisted of a partnership with Captain Charles Uznay, another Hungarian. The latter was associated at one time with principals of Wass, Molitor & Co. The *State Register and Year Book of Facts for the Year 1857,* compiled in 1856, contains a full-page advertisement for Haraszthy, Uznay & Co. The text noted that the firm would "return deposits in bars within 24 hours and receive deposits by the Express Offices.... Bars of their manufacture can be disposed of without any difficulty or inconvenience to shippers."

[3] Per notices in *Alta California,* June 2, 1857. A lithograph by Britton & Rey shows the firms headquarters as a pretentious building with columns on the front, occupying what seems to be a large portion of the block at the corner of Brannan and Harris streets.

[4] Information about Haraszthy is adapted from the 1982 auction catalogue of the Henry Clifford Collection by Bowers and Ruddy Galleries. The forthcoming work by Dan Owens, *An Encyclopedia of California Coiners and Assayers Related to Numismatics, 1849-1863,* will contain extensive material about Haraszthy, the scandal, and surrounding events.

[5] James Ross Snowden, "Assay of Foreign Coins." Letter transmitted to Secretary of the Treasury James Guthrie from Mint Director Snowden, dated Philadelphia Mint, February 6, 1857.

[6] *Alta California,* January 6, 1855. Various accounts of steamer travel of the era reveal that it was the rule, not the exception, that crew members would prey upon passengers and cargo.

and Marysville); Justh & Hunter (San Francisco and Marysville); Henry Hentsch (San Francisco); and the well-known firm of Kellogg & Humbert (San Francisco). These bars were made in large sizes for ease of transportation, and if they had arrived in New York, they would have been shipped to the Philadelphia Mint for coinage, or the New York Assay Office to be refined, or transshipped to other ports such as London, the latter city being the world focal point for the gold market at the time. At the time, many bulk users of gold preferred ingots to minted coins, so long as the reputation of the assayer had been established.

Sizes of the rectangular bars ranged from a "small" five-ounce ingot by Blake & Co. to an incredible *63-pound* ingot from Justh & Hunter. The bars were unparted and ranged in fineness from 580 to 973.[1] The news of the find came as a sensation to the numismatic community.

Great care was taken by the Columbus America Discovery Group to preserve other artifacts from the sea floor including personal effects of passengers, bottles, and hardware. Two sealed trunks were found and yielded clothing, reading material, and other interesting items, a window on the life of the passengers in one particular month in late summer 1857.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1858)

History and Commentary

In 1858 it was business as usual at the San Francisco Mint. Silver coinage included resumed production of the dime plus the now-regular output of quarters and half dollars.

Among gold coins, no quarter eagles or half eagles were struck, although 10 obverse dies were shipped to the Mint in anticipation of a liberal mintage of the former. As usual, emphasis was far and away on the popular double eagles.

1858-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 60,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1858-S dime is scarce in worn grades today. When seen, the typical piece shows extensive wear and is apt to grade Good to VG or Fine. EF and AU pieces are seldom seen, even in advanced collections.

Rarity in Mint State: In full Mint State the 1858-S dime is virtually unobtainable, with just one or two believed to exist. The MS-64 Eliasberg Collection coin is believed to be the finest known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: The coinage is from four die pairs shipped.

1858-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 121,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1858-S quarter dollar is highly prized in all worn grades from nearly smooth Abt. Good, through G, VG, and higher. Even the greatest specialized collections sold in the past century were apt to lack an example finer than VF or EF. The Eliasberg coin was AU.

Rarity in Mint State: In Mint State this coin is generally unrecorded in the literature, including *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins* (1988; "unobtainable Uncirculated") and Larry Briggs' magisterial *Comprehensive Encyclopedia of United States Liberty Seated Quarters* (1991; "nonexistent"). An MS-62 (PCGS) specimen later came out of the woodwork, so to speak, and was included in the Bowers and Merena August 1995 Rarities Sale. While unusual things do happen now and then in numismatics, it seems likely that the 1858-S will forever be a vaunted rarity in Mint State.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 12 obverse dies were sent to the San Francisco Mint from Philadelphia, and in March 1858 two reverses were sent. Apparently, only two obverse dies were used (Briggs 1991). • Only known with large S mintmark, in two positional varieties.

1858-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 476,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: 1858-S half dollars, while elusive, are hardly rare, this being the earliest dated San Francisco half dollar for which this can be stated.

Rarity in Mint State: Probably somewhere between 15 and 25 Mint State pieces exist, certainly a small quantity in relation to the generous mintage for this year. The Pryor Collection (1996) had two MS-64s.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Eight obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco on October 20, 1857, and four more obverse dies were sent in March 1858 along with two reverse dies. Of the 12 obverses on hand, Wiley and Bugert (1993) have recognized the use of 10, plus nine different reverses, the latter including leftover dies from earlier times. • Large, medium and small S mintmarks are reported, the last report possibly erroneous (cf. Breen 1988). • One obverse displays a misplaced 8 (from the date logotype punch) on the base below Miss Liberty above the second regular 8 of the date.

General information concerning Type I and II reverses: On *Philadelphia Mint* half dollars 1842-1858 the so-called (Breen 1988) Type I reverse was employed; at the same mint the Type II was used on most (but not all) reverses 1859-1860. This reverse was used on San Francisco Mint half dollars as late as 1864, although the Type II appears in 1862. • Type I reverse: Long closed claws; large arrowheads, upper serifs of LF (HALF) touch. • Type II reverse: Shorter open claws; small arrowheads; space between upper serif of L (HALF) is shorter and distant from F.

Silver bars: $19,753 value.

1858-S $1 Gold Dollar

Mintage: 10,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1858-S gold $1 is scarce in worn grades such as VF and EF, and is quite rare in AU.

Rarity in Mint State: This gold dollar is an important [illegible]

[1] Tommy Thompson, *America's Lost Treasure: A Pictorial Chronicle of the Sinking and Recovery of the United States Mail Steamship Central America*, 1998, passim.

ity in Mint State, but not in the class of the 1857-S. Probably only about 10 to 20 are known, mostly in lower numerical levels.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Three obverses and 10 reverses (the date side) were shipped to San Francisco this year, in anticipation of a very generous coinage that obviously did not materialize.

1858-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 18,600.

Rarity in circulated grades: Scarce in all grades, with VF being about the norm. EF coins are scarcer yet (the S.S. Brother Jonathan yielded two), and AU examples are very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: Possibly nonexistent. From this point forward through the 1860s, Mint State $5 coins from San Francisco are incredibly rare and in some cases unknown.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverses were shipped on October 1857, two more in March 1858. The leftover reverses were used from 1857. • Small S (about 1 mm.) mintmark.

1858-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 11,800.

Rarity in circulated grades: Very scarce in any and all grades. VF is the norm (including for many of the more prominent specialized collections that have come to auction over the years) with an occasional EF and even more occasional AU reported.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1858-dated obverse dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint in October 1857. Sufficient reverses were on hand that no new ones were needed. • Medium S (1.5 mm.) mintmark on examples seen.

Notes: Deliveries from the mint took place in two groups: 800 in the last quarter of the year and 11,000 in the second quarter.

Minting of various denominations was mainly done in response to the specific requests of depositors, although some coins were struck for the "bullion fund" at the Mint so that [illegible] of popular denominations (mainly the $20, but some smaller ones as well) could be made without the depositor having to wait until his specific deposit was assayed, refined, and [illegible]. Thus, possibly the low mintage eagles of this era were mainly used for the bullion fund.

1858-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 846,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: 1858-S $20 pieces are readily available in VF to EF grades, but are quite scarce in AU.

Rarity in Mint State: Very scarce. Probably 20 to 30 are known in Mint State, including a few from a northern California [illegible] (Breen 1988). Most known specimens are in the range of MS-60 to MS-63, although there [illegible] higher.

Hoards: Some. This is the earliest year for San Francisco Mint double eagles for which hoards are [illegible].

Dies and die varieties: 12 obverse dies were provided for this coinage, but some probably remained unused. The supply of reverse dies on hand was diminishing, and six new reverses were sent from Philadelphia.

Gold bars: $816,296 value in unparted bars.

Mints Use California Gold

1858: Total California gold metal production: $45,591,140; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $19,104,370.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $1,372,506.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $5,294.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $448,440.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $19,660,531.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1859)

History and Commentary

With the addition of the silver dollar denomination this year, the list of values coined at San Francisco included four silver denominations and five gold, an all-time high for the facility up to that point.

Highest production quantities were registered by the silver half dollar and the gold double eagle.

1859-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 60,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1859-S dime is rare in all worn grades, with most being G, VG, or Fine. In EF and AU preservation the 1859-S is the rarest San Francisco dime of the entire Liberty Seated series.

Rarity in Mint State: Possibly nonexistent. The Holy Grail, the oriflamme dime in Mint State for the era studied, the rarest of all Mint State San Francisco Mint dimes of this or any other design, although the 1858-S is just a nose behind.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six 1859-dated obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco from Philadelphia in November 1858, this antedating being the usual practice (otherwise, the western mint would have to remain idle until well into the new year). No new reverse dies were sent.

1859-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 80,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Scarce in all worn grades. When seen the 1859-S is apt to be Good to Fine. EF and AU examples are major rarities, AU being the finest seen by the writer.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six 1859 obverse dies were shipped in November 1858 for an anticipated generous coinage. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark.

General information concerning Type I and Type II: In

this year the "Type I" (cf. Breen's *Encyclopedia*, 1988) obverse and reverse was supplemented at the Philadelphia Mint by the Type II style, which became standard. However, all quarter dollars from San Francisco through 1865 have the Type I reverse, primarily because these dies were shipped before the changes were made, and later dies were not needed. • Type I obverse, per Breen: Single hair ribbon, fingers of pole hand are nearly straight. • Type I reverse: Eagle's eye is hollow, the claws are closely spaced, the heavy arrowheads nearly touch one another. • Type II obverse: Double hair ribbon, fingers of the pole hand are more curved, the index finger elongated. • Type II reverse (not used at the San Francisco Mint): Eagles eye is solid and convex, claws shorter and open, and the arrowheads are smaller and slightly farther apart.

1859-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 566,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Although most 1859-S half dollars were probably shipped to China, enough remained stateside that they are scarce, but not rare today.

Rarity in Mint State: At this level the rarity of the 1859-S is not quite that of the 1858-S, but is close. Probably about 20 to 30 are known. This is the first San Francisco Mint half dollar year for which Mint State coins come on the market with some frequency, perhaps several each year. The Pryor Collection (1996) had an MS-64 and an MS-63, the latter pedigreed to the Norweb Collection (1988).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 12 1859-dated obverse dies were sent to San Francisco in two shipments, six in November 1858 and six in May 1859. However, Wiley and Bugert (1993) have verified the use of just five obverses, these in combination with five reverses. • Large S (1.65 mm.) and medium S (1.4 mm) mintmark styles are known, the latter being scarcer.

Notes: Despite silver dollars being coined this year expressly for the China trade, many half dollars were also exported.

1859-S silver dollar, the only coin of this denomination struck at the San Francisco Mint during the period under study (1854-1865). The Liberty Seated motif had been in use at the Philadelphia Mint since 1840. (Bowers, *Silver Dollars and Trade Dollars of the United States: A Complete Encyclopedia*)

1859-S $1 Silver Dollar

Mintage: 20,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: In worn grades such as VF and EF the 1859-S silver dollar is quite scarce. AU coins are in the rare category.

Rarity in Mint State: In Mint State the 1859-S is a rarity, formidably so if MS-63 or finer.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 10 pairs of dollar dies went to the San Francisco branch in 1859, but most remained unused.[1] • Medium S mintmark.

Notes: The 1859-S dollar was coined in response to a compelling need. Numismatic historian John M. Willem, in *The United States Trade Dollar*, 1965, quotes a telling letter from Superintendent Charles H. Hempstead of the San Francisco Mint, dated November 18, 1858, to Director Snowden:

> We are now attracting to our shores large quantities of silver, in bars, from Mexico, for which we pay in silver coins. By reference to your letter of the fourth of August last, I find that you say that single "silver deposits may be received, but they are only payable in *silver dollars* or in *fine silver* bars."
>
> We have never received any dies for silver dollars, nor am I aware of the reason why this branch has never made that denomination of coin. I would, therefore, suggest that the coinage of silver dollars would relieve us of just one-half of the labor now necessary in the coinage of large quantities of Mexican silver.[2]

On February 19, 1859, Snowden sent this reply: "As the facts stated by you indicate the propriety of coinage of silver dollars at your branch of the mint, I have caused four pairs of dies of that denomination to be prepared and forwarded to you per express. A weight for the adjustment of the coin (from which others can be made) will be found in the box containing the dies."

The San Francisco *Bulletin*, as quoted by Willem, commented: "The authority to coin silver dollars, received by mail yesterday, is quite an object to the commerce of the Pacific Coast. Crude silver has today been deposited for coinage to the amount of upward of $7,000 by one house in the Mexican trade." Willem noted that on August 1859 *Merchant's Magazine* related that "every vessel leaving San Francisco for Chinese ports takes a large amount of Mexican dollars."

Only 20,000 1859-S silver dollars were minted, and only small quantities were struck at San Francisco after that: no more than a few hundred in 1870, 9,000 in 1872, and only 700 in 1873. Why were not more made? Apparently, because Chinese traders continued to prefer the heavier Mexican dollars. In 1873 a new denomination, the heavy (420 grains) trade dollar, was made and effectively competed with the Mexican coins.

As a reflection of what types of goods were imported from China into San Francisco during this era, this listing of items for sale is from the Chinese Bazaar operated by Chy Lung & Co., 540 Sacramento Street:[3]

> Wholesale only: Rice, sugar, and tea.
>
> Wholesale and retail: Silk shawls, silk dress patterns, silk bandannas, silk sashes, silk handkerchiefs, embroidered linen handkerchiefs, satin aprons, satin dress pat-

[1] Two obverse dies were shipped there for an anticipated 1860-S coinage, two more for an expected 1861-S production, and an increase to four pairs for 1862-S, but no more silver dollars were made there until 1870.

[2] This is in reference to the coining in San Francisco of silver dimes, quarters, and half dollars from silver taken from melted-down Mexican coins. It cost nearly twice as much to coin a given amount of silver into two half dollars as it did to make one single dollar, and several times as much to coin 10 dimes. Ignored in this letter from Hempstead is the fact that in 1858, smaller silver coins were of lower bullion value in relation to face value, per the provisions of the Act of February 21, 1853, which had reduced the authorized weights of coins from the half dime to the half dollar.

[3] *Alta California*, July 27, 186[illegible].

terns, pure napkins, sewing silks, straw matting, Chinese curiosities, rice paper picture books, inlaid chess boards, ivory chess men, lacquered ware, lacquered tea caddies, lacquered ladies work baskets, porcelain tea sets, porcelain dinner sets, porcelain toilet sets, sandalwood fans, Chinese kites, dolls, toys, and much other Chinese goods.

Silver bars: $29,470 value.

1859-S $1 Gold Dollar

Mintage: 15,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1859-S gold dollar is scarce in any grade such as VF or EF and rare in AU.

Rarity in Mint State: Mint State coins are very hard to find, with probably no more than 20 to 30 in existence, and even this estimate may be too generous. When found, which is not often, the typical 1859-S is apt to be less than choice. Some have prooflike surfaces which serve to accentuate any marks that may be present.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 10 1859-dated reverses were shipped to San Francisco in November 1858. Leftover obverses, undated, were employed. • Medium S mintmark.

1859-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 15,200.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1859-S quarter eagle is scarce in all worn grades due to its low mintage. EF is about the median grade for specimens appearing at auction over the years. When David W. Akers was preparing the manuscript for his 1975 book, he found that in the preceding seven years only one coin better than EF had appeared at auction.

Rarity in Mint State: Exceedingly rare, with perhaps four to six known to exist, including at least one choice specimen (MS-64 in the Bowers and Merena Rarities Sale, August 1996).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: [illegible]

Notes: [illegible]

[illegible]

The one-of-a-kind 1859-S $5 gold half eagle recovered from the S.S. *Brother Jonathan.*

1859-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 13,220.

Rarity in circulated grades: The low-mintage 1859-S $5 is scarce in all worn grades, much more than generally appreciated. Very few have appeared over the years. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded one example of this variety, an EF.

Rarity in Mint State: Only one or two Mint State coins are believed to exist. Stack's sale of May 1995 offered a specimen catalogued as MS-62 (NGC), the "only Uncirculated certified."

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1859 obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1858, and two more were sent in May 1859. • Small S mintmark on all seen.

1859-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 7,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1859-S $10 is scarce in any and all grades and is a key rarity in its series. The typical grade encountered is VF, with an occasional EF. In recent times a few AU coins have been certified, some of which may have been called EF years ago.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six obverse dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint, but most remained unused. • Large S (1.7 mm) mintmark on all seen.

Notes: Breen (1988): "In 1859 Longacre prepared a new reverse hub, found on Philadelphia coins through 1865; this differs from the old 1840-1858 hub having shorter, thinner claws. It does not occur on branch mint coins because their reverses through 1865 were all dies leftover from 1857-1858."

1859-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

An 1859-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Mintage: 636,445.

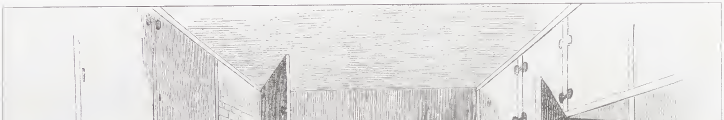
Rarity in circulated grades: The 1859-S $20 is plentiful, but only in such preservation as VF, EF, or the occasional AU, some of the latter appearing in celebrated collections over the years. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded 19 examples of this variety, mostly EF and AU.

Rarity in Mint State: Perhaps 25 to 40 are known, mostly in lower Mint State ranges from 60 to 63. This figure includes some that may have been graded as high level AU a few years ago. Some Mint State coins may be from a northern California estate circa 1973 (Breen 1988).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: One variety has the word LIBERTY slightly doubled in the headband (Breen 7199). • Medium S mintmark.

"Gold brick, actual size," is the caption of this 1859 engraving printed as part of a feature about the United States Sub-Treasury in New York City. Cast at the New York City Assay Office, the immense ingot weighs 267.70 ounces and is of "fine gold" quality, at 992 fine. The value is stated as $5,492.35 (equivalent to $20.67 per ounce in terms of absolutely pure gold).



Vault in the U.S. Sub-Treasury filled with gold ingots (the rectangular objects on shelves to each side) and bags of gold coins. (*Harper's Weekly*, February 26, 1859)

Gold bars: $19,872 value in fine bars.

Mints Use California Gold

1859: Total California gold metal production: $45,846,599; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $14,098,564.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $959,192.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $699.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $93,272.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $11,694,872.

Grand totals 1848-1859

Use of California gold at various mints:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold 1854-1859: $106,641,698.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold 1848-1859: $229,171,219.

Charlotte Mint use of California gold 1848-1859: $87,321.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold 1848-1859: $1,230,706.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold 1848-1859: $22,148,174.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold 1854-1859: $92,031,723.

Grand total, all facilities 1848-1859: $451,310,840.

Notes: The high total for Philadelphia is explained by this mint's use of California gold during the period 1848-1853, before either the San Francisco Mint or the New York City Assay Office opened (1854). Charlotte utilized California gold only for a few years, 1854-1856. Dahlonega used California gold continuously from 1848 to 1859, with the peak years being 1851-1854.

A Visit to the N.Y. Sub-Treasury

Harper's Weekly, February 26, 1859, included an article, "The United States Sub-Treasury at New York." The text noted that the facility received gold coins and ingots. The former were received from bullion and specie dealers as well as banks. The text included the following (excerpts):

> It is not generally known, but it is nevertheless strictly true—that the banks and specie brokers are in the habit of taking counterfeit or imperfect coins. We all read the other day the story of the Troy bank president who brought to this city, in his trunk, $20,000 in counterfeit bills on his bank without suspecting their genuineness [illegible]. There is just as much error abroad with regard to coins; so much science and skill are now devoted to the imitation of specie that a man needs to have been born with an eye, an ear, and a touch adapted for the business, and further to have improved these senses by large practice. To distinguish the ring of alloy from that of gold—to detect unlawful alloy in a piece which really contains a large proportion of gold—to discover a piece that has been sweated, or filed, or bored, or disemboweled—needs no common tact.
>
> The gentlemen who do the counting for the Sub-Treasury count with both hands. When a $5,000 bag is emptied before them, they plunge both hands simultaneously into the glittering mass, and withdraw each with a coin between the thumb and the forefinger.
>
> Specie is kept in the Sub-Treasury in various shapes.[1] Gold and silver coins are kept in bags. But the bulk of the bullion is in the shape of "bricks." These are solid pieces of metal in the form of small oblong blocks. [Bricks range in value from over $5,000 to as low as about $200.] The $200 bricks, which one can take between the finger and thumb and stow away as conveniently as a toothpick in the waistcoat pocket, ought to be more generally used than they are by travelers. A couple of hundred dollars in coin is an awkward sum to carry in the purse or on the person; in the shape of a Treasury "brick" it can be carried more conveniently than a watch.
>
> In the Sub-Treasury vault, a common man is not a little amazed to find himself in a room the walls of which are, literally, solid gold. But there they stand, the gold bricks as close as they can pack, each of them worth from $5,000 to $1,000. A shelf of such bricks is a large fortune.

The New York City Assay Office (1903)

The following is excerpted from "Uncle Sam's Gold Bricks," an article in *The Numismatist*, October 1903, and reflects the activities of 44 years after the *Harper's Weekly* article. The Sub-Treasury (storage) and the New York City Assay Office (assay and evaluation, also storage) performed certain of the same functions:

> Beneath stout bars guarding a wide, arched window in the United States Assay Office, in Wall Street, thousands of dollars worth of little gold bricks, the honest and true kind, pass everyday from Uncle Sam's coffers to the bands of jewelers and bankers. And all that Uncle Sam charges for the exchange is five cents on $100 for the small ones. For the week ending July 18 the gold bars (they did not call them bricks in the Assay Office) exchanged for gold coin amounted to $190,780.17. This is a small figure compared to what the office has done on a busy day. Once, six or seven years ago, when a large quantity of gold was to be shipped to Europe, the Assay Office exchanged $8 million into bars.
>
> The bars Uncle Sam dispenses are of two general sizes, the $5,000 size, for bankers, and the $150 size for jewelers, the small size being about an inch and a quarter long, three-quarters wide, and perhaps half an inch or less in thickness. Very often they run up to $200 or even more in value.[2] Their size adapts them to the size of the jeweler's crucible. A remarkable feature of this exchange of legal tender for gold bars is that one cannot always get just the amount he wishes. If a jeweler

[1] Specie = minted gold or silver, not bars. However, the writer of the *Harper's* story seems to include bullion in the same definition, an error.

[2] To the writer's knowledge, these little gold bars never had a numismatic following at the time, which is unfortunate as today any surviving bars would be highly collectible. However, a few have survived, probably as a matter of chance. An example is provided by Lot 159 in B. Max Mehl's catalogue of the C.H. Imhoff Collection, December 14, 1926: "One of Smallest U.S. Gold Assay Bars Ever Issued. United States Assay Office, New York, gold bar 998.3 Fine, 5.46 ozs., ($112.68). Size 25 x 38 x 9 mm. Perfect. Highly interesting. Seldom met up with."

or banker wishes $10,000 in gold bullion Uncle Sam gives him as near that amount as he possibly can. It may be $9,970.50 or $10,060.30, because the bars vary in size and weight, and practically all of them have odd cents in their value. The bars the cashier handed out one day this week were stamped $531.70 and $123.10.

In buying the gold bars the purchaser first tells the cashier at the Assay Office how much he wishes. The cashier comes as near this amount as he can with the bars on hand, and then the purchaser goes next door to the sub-treasury, where he deposits his legal tender, gold certificates, greenbacks, or gold coin, for the amount designated by the Assay Office cashier as the nearest to the desired amount, receiving therefore a certificate which, upon presentation at the Assay Office, insures the delivery of the bars.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1860)

History and Commentary

At the San Francisco Mint in 1860 silver and gold denominations were struck from the dime to the double eagle.

Although the 1859-S silver dollar had been a great success, and the 20,000 pieces were quickly absorbed in the channels of commerce, no further coins were struck of this denomination. This was also the last year within the present study (1854-1865) for which $1 and $3 gold coins were made. These denominations seem to have been less popular in recent years, and few depositors of metal had requested them.

1860-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 140,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1860-S dime is scarce in worn grades, with most being Good or VG. EF and AU specimens are rare.

Rarity in Mint State: Probably seven to 15 specimens exist, most of which are very well struck and deeply frosty. The fame of the 1860-S is enduring due to its obsolete design. Thus, whenever a specimen crosses the auction block it gets more than its share of attention. Some have equated the 1860-S to the virtually (if not completely) impossible Mint State 1858-S and 1859-S, which simply is not so. Among the finest sold in modern times is the MS-65 (PCGS) coin in the Heritage sale of July 1994.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies with stars, dated 1860, were sent to San Francisco on November 2, 1859, but no new reverse dies were shipped.

Notes: The 1860-S dime is at once anomalous and anachronistic, as the obverse design has stars as in 1859. The reverse design is also leftover from 1859. In contrast, in 1860 at the Philadelphia and New Orleans mints new designs were used, with the inscription UNITED STATES OF AMERICA on the obverse and with a "cereal" wreath on the reverse.

1860-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 56,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1860-S quarter dollar is a world-class rarity in any grade, but is largely unappreciated. It is one of those sleeper coins that few people know about, and I must confess until I encountered the Eliasberg Collection coin (F-15 grade) I had not thought much about it myself. However, the record is clear. Here, indeed, is a coin with few peers anywhere in the silver series!

An insightful article by James C. Gray, "The 1860-S Quarter, the Most Underrated Seated Coin," appeared in *The Gobrecht Journal*, November 1990. The title says it all. In *The Gobrecht Journal*, March 1994, a survey by Larry Briggs of quarters in collections of which he was aware revealed that the most elusive San Francisco quarter was the 1860-S, of which he knew of 12 pieces, followed quickly by the 1872-S at 13 pieces, 1878-S at 14, 1871-S at 15, 1866-S at 17, and 1867-S at 18. The most numerous was the 1876-S at 61. The survey covered pieces in all grades. Briggs revealed that despite many years of looking, only a few 1860-S coins had been seen, these being cleaned and damaged. Just one achieved the Extremely Fine level, but with some reverse scratches.

Of course, there are some 1860-S quarter dollars in existence here and there outside of specialized collections, but it seems that the population is likely fewer than 40 pieces and possibly even fewer than 20, with the highest grade possibly not even reaching AU-55, and with the norm being well worn. Augustus G. Heaton noted in his 1893 *Mint Marks* study, "It is a scarce piece," seemingly an understatement!

Rarity in Mint State: None known. Should one ever turn up it would be a candidate for an illustration and a few exclamation points on the cover of *The Gobrecht Journal*.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies for the 1860 coinage were shipped from Philadelphia to San Francisco on November 2, 1859. No new reverse dies were needed. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark on those seen.

Notes: The mintage of 56,000 pieces in no way explains the rarity of this issue. There must have been some special circumstance, most probably the exportation of virtually the entire production to the Orient, as was done with many other San Francisco Mint silver coins in the era. The 1860-S keeps its secret well, and we may never know the details.

1860-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 472,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: 1860-S half dollars are more or less available in all grades, although such levels as VG and Fine are more often seen than EF or AU. High grade circulated pieces are often seen cleaned surfaces.

Rarity in Mint State: A reversion in rarity takes place for the 1860-S half dollar, and examples in Mint State are scarcer than for the two immediately preceding years. Perhaps 12 to 20 decent examples are known, some of which are choice with satiny surfaces. The Pryor Collection specimen (1996) was an MS-64.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard (No. 17 described by Breen (1988) as follows: 'About the year 1956 some unidentified individuals discovered an immense hoard in Guatemala, reflecting wartime shipments of coins as bullion. The Guatemala Hoard coins are readily recognizable. They are dated between 1859 and 1865 Philadelphia and between 1860-S and 1865-S, most often 1861 and 1862, ranging from VF to nearly Mint State, all cleaned with baking soda or some other abrasive. There are many hundreds of each date, possibly a couple thousand of 1861-1862. As there are no later date coins as part of the hoard, I am fur-

New Netherlands Coin Company in 1956) most likely the hoard was buried about 1865 or early 1866."

Dies and die varieties: Wiley and Bugert (1993) have identified the use of two obverse dies and two reverse dies this year.: Large S (1.65 mm.) and medium S (1.4 mm.) mintmarks.

Silver bars: $211,412 value.

1860-S $1 Gold Dollar

Mintage: 13,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1860-S gold $1 is fairly scarce in any grade. Probably somewhere between 400 and 800 exist in circulated grades, most of these being in higher levels such as EF and AU. A survey of auction catalogues indicates that these are the typical grades encountered, including in the most important cabinets.

Rarity in Mint State: The total population is probably fewer than 50. However, among San Francisco Mint gold dollars, the 1860-S is more likely to be found in Mint State than any other.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four pairs of dies for the 1860-S coinage were shipped on December 2, 1859. • Medium S mintmark. • An *inverted S* variety exists with the lower curve of the S smaller than the upper, but little numismatic attention has been paid to it.

Notes: 1860 was the next to last time that gold dollars were struck at the San Francisco Mint (there was a final coinage of 3,000 pieces a decade later in 1870).

1860-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 35,600.

Rarity in circulated grades: Several hundred are estimated to exist, with typical grades being VF and EF, the average being [illegible] than quarter eagles of the preceding decade. The 1860-S is [illegible] in [illegible] grades.

Rarity in Mint State: The historical record as compared to [illegible] numbers [illegible] confusing, but it is [illegible] that very few Mint State coins exist. The number of [illegible] Mint State [illegible] to eight.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: [illegible]

1860-S $3 Gold

Mintage: 4,408 (net).

Rarity in circulated grades: [illegible] EF, AU [illegible]

Rarity in Mint State: [illegible] MS-[illegible]

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1860-dated reverse dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint on November 2, 1859, but apparently only one was used. • Small S mintmark.

Notes: Breen (1988): 7,000 were coined, "of which 2,592 were found lightweight and remained unissued until December 1869, when they were melted for recoinage into other denominations," giving a net mintage of just 4,408.

1860-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

One of the three 1860-S $5 gold half eagles recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

Mintage: 21,200.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1860-S half eagle is quite scarce in all grades. VF and EF coins are about the norm. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded three in the latter grade. AU examples are notable rarities; indeed, AU coins are called "unobtainable" by Breen (1988).

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1860 obverse dies were shipped from Philadelphia to San Francisco on November 2, 1859. Leftover reverses were used. • Small S mintmark on all seen.

1860-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 5,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1860-S eagle is very rare in all grades, reflective of the low mintage this year. When seen the typical specimen is apt to be VF, although a few EF coins are known as are still fewer AU examples. The Norweb Collection coin (1978) was catalogued as AU-50 and was pedigreed to Spink & Son, London.

Rarity in Mint State: Possibly unknown. None certified or reported in modern times.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies were sent to San Francisco for this issue, but not all were used. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark.

1860-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 544,950.

Rarity in circulated grades: VF seems to be the norm for this issue, but enough EF and AU coins are around that specialists will have no difficulty in locating one. The latter grade has been seen in a number of fine collections that have appeared in auctions over the years.

Rarity in Mint State: Perhaps 15 to 25 are known, mostly in the range of MS-60 to MS-63.

Hoards: The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded 25 coins grading EF and AU.

Dies and die varieties: Six 1860 obverse dies were sent to San Francisco on November 2, 1859. Reverse dies were already on hand. • Medium S (1.3 mm.) mintmark.

A lightly circulated 1860-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Mints Use California Gold

1860: Total California gold metal production: $44,095,163; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $11,319,913.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $663,389.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $1,097.

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $97,135.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $6,023,628.

Notes: This was the last full year of normal operation of the Charlotte, Dahlonega, and New Orleans mints prior to their closing during the Civil War. Charlotte had not used California gold since 1856. Storm clouds of secession were rising, and at the end of the year South Carolina withdrew from the Union, the first step in forming the Confederate States of America.

Major New Silver and Gold Sources

In the *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*, covering the fiscal year ended June 30, 1860, Director James Ross Snowden mentioned the Washoe region (Comstock Lode), which had become increasingly important, and also took notice of a private mint in Denver:

> Within the last year some new mines of silver have been brought to our notice, the most important of which are situated in the Washoe region, in the Territory of Utah, about 330 miles northeast from San Francisco. At the Branch Mint in that city upwards of $80,000 were received from these mines during the last fiscal year, and they promise a considerable and increasing supply of silver for that institution and the other mints. It has, however, given some trouble when used as an agent, or assistant, for parting silver from native gold, on account of the presence of antimony, a very small portion of which induces brittleness in gold. A similar annoyance has, we are informed, occurred in the British Mint in its operations upon Australian gold.
>
> In the gold producing region of Kansas, namely at Denver City, a private minting establishment has been set in operation by Messrs. Clark, Gruber & Co., from which pieces of ten and five dollars are issued. They are of various grades of fineness; our assays [conducted at Philadelphia] show them to be from 815 to 838 thousandths, and the pieces are evidently made direct from native gold with its silver alloy, without any attempt to fix or maintain any exact standard. The weight is greater than in corresponding pieces of the national coinage in order to make up for the deficiency of fineness. The 10 dollar pieces vary from 273 to 285 grains. On the average, and adding the value of the silver alloy, and deducting the mint charges, the pieces are found to be of professed value, or slightly over.[1] The devices on the 10 dollar pieces are appropriate and distinctive;[2] but on the five dollar piece they are made in close imitation of the legal coin, a reprehensible and illegal practice countenanced by previous similar [illegible] in California.

Beginning in 1860, the firm of Clark, Gruber & Co., Leavenworth, Kansas, bankers who had established a branch in Denver, produced gold coins of denominations from $2.50 to $20. Shown here are two types of $10 gold eagles. The 1860 style features a fanciful representation of Pikes Peak in the form of a tall volcanic cone, quite unlike the peak itself. Probably, the dies were made in the East by someone who was not familiar with the morphology of the mountain. In the following year, 1861, the design was changed to copy the federal $10 eagle, a "reprehensible practice" in the view of Mint Director James Ross Snowden. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Old Gold Dollars Melted

The same *Annual Report* went on to note that since June 1860 many of the old-style (1849-1854) [illegible] gold dollars had been melted down, presumably at the New York

[illegible]

[illegible]

City Assay Office and at the Philadelphia Mint, and had been recoined into the newer, thinner versions (Type III design instituted in 1856). The San Francisco Mint had made Type I gold dollars only in one year, 1854.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1861)

History and Commentary

On June 30, 1861, Robert J. Stevens became superintendent of the San Francisco Mint, remaining in the post until to June 29, 1863, when he was ejected in view of alleged improprieties. For a long time the Mint had seen defalcations and conflicts of interest by its officers and employees. In distant Philadelphia, beginning in May 1861 and continuing through September 1866, James Pollock was director, named by incoming President Abraham Lincoln as the successor to James Ross Snowden. Pollock was in charge of all branch mints including San Francisco.

The silver coinage was produced in fair quantities as were gold issues. The 1861 *oeuvre* of the San Francisco Mint includes the distinctive and curious double eagle variety with "tall letters" reverse, from dies by Anthony C. Paquet, a style not seen elsewhere in United States circulating coinage save for two known specimens made at Philadelphia.

1861-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

1861-S dime. This design, with Liberty Seated and the inscription UNITED STATES OF AMERICA on the obverse, was struck at San Francisco from 1861 onward. (Tower Hill Collection)

Mintage: 172,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: What happened to all of the [illegible] possibility, [illegible] seem to have offered an easier [illegible] disappeared, and today specimens [illegible] are quite scarce. When seen, grades of [illegible] being very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: [illegible] reason, the San Francisco Mint dimes [illegible] through and including [illegible] Mint State, and [illegible]

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: [illegible] for the coinage [illegible]

Notes: [illegible] UNITED STATES OF AMERICA [illegible] These obverse and reverse styles had been employed at Philadelphia and New Orleans beginning in the previous year, 1860.

The published high mintage figures for the dimes of this era, through and including 1861-S, have been a [illegible]

casual researchers from learning their true numismatic nature, as such numbers yield no clue that these are, indeed, *rarities*.

1861-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 96,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Very scarce. Usually seen in low grades such as Good and VG. A specialist would be justifiably proud of an EF, and if an AU could be found, this would be an occasion for celebration, as only a few such pieces are known.

Rarity in Mint State: None known. *Deja vu* with the 1860-S.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six obverse dies but no new reverses were shipped to San Francisco for this year's coinage. • Larry Briggs noted that the use of two obverses and two reverses is confirmed, both reverses having a large S (1.4 mm.) mintmark.

1861-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 939,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1861-S is fairly plentiful in worn grades. Most show extensive wear.

Rarity in Mint State: Scarce in Mint state, but more available than any of its predecessors. Probably a few dozen are known, including some satiny gems. The Pryor Collection (1996) had MS-64 examples of each of the two mintmark sizes, representing the finest that the owner could find in 20 years of searching.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard No. 1 (see 1860-S above).

There was another Guatemala Hoard (No. 2): John J. Ford, Jr., told of a large group of half dollars whose most plentiful variety was the 1861-S:[2] "About 1942 the Stack's dealership bought a tremendous hoard of Liberty Seated half dollars. These were somewhat oxidized and were said to have been dug up in Guatemala. Dates ranged from 1853 to about 1864. I remember that there were a lot of San Francisco coins, especially 1861-S, but there was no 1855-S. I studied the lot carefully and was the first, I believe, to notice that the S mintmarks from this era came in three different sizes."[3]

Dies and die varieties: Wiley and Bugert (1993) have identified the use of eight different obverse dies and five different reverse dies for this coinage. • Large S (1.65 mm) mintmark. • Medium S (1.4 mm.); called "small" by Wiley and Bugert.

Silver bars: $71,486 value.

1861-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 24,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Somewhat scarce, but examples

[1] The writer had occasion a few years ago to examine a selection of "Uncirculated" dimes of this era sent to an eastern client in the 1890s by San Francisco dealer W.F. Greany. However, by current rules each coin graded AU and was rather poorly cleaned. I mention this simply to raise a red flag that certain listed or reported Mint State coins from the past might not pass muster for today's stricter standards.

[2] Contribution to *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997.

[3] Although Augustus G. Heaton had discussed mintmark sizes in 1893 in his *Mint Marks* monograph, but by the early 1940s this study had been largely forgotten.

appear on the market regularly. Most are VF or, less often, EF coins are seen, and still less often, AU examples are encountered.

Rarity in Mint State: Exceedingly rare, with only a handful known, these being in lower Mint State ranges.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: One 1861-dated obverse was shipped to the San Francisco Mint in November 1860 and another obverse was sent in June 1861. It seems that only a modest coinage was anticipated.

Notes: Most have light striking in areas.

1861-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

The only 1861-S $5 gold half eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Mintage: 18,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1861-S half eagle is rare in any and all grades. Although the mintage was relatively generous, most of the pieces seem to have disappeared at an early date; reason unknown. Walter Breen (1988): "Prohibitively rare above VF, unknown AU." A piece in the Lexington Collection (1994), offered later than the above citations, was certified AU-50 by NGC. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded one example of this variety, a lovely AU.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Two 1861-dated obverses were shipped to San Francisco on November 1860, and another obverse was shipped on June 1861. • Small S mintmark.

1861-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

The solitary 1861-S $10 gold eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Mintage: 15,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1861-S eagle is very scarce in any grade. Most known examples are VF or EF, the former being slightly more available. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded one example of this variety, an EF specimen. AU pieces are very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Three obverse dies were sent to the Philadelphia Mint. There was still a supply of usable reverses on hand. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark on those studied.

Notes: Sometimes seen weakly struck.

1861-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

1861-S $20 gold with the regular (not Paquet) reverse. (Stetson University Collection)

Mintage: 748,750 pieces coined.

Rarity in circulated grades: In the context of San Francisco Mint double eagles the 1861-S is readily available in VF grade, this being the most often encountered preservation. However, enough EF and AU coins exist that the specialist will find no difficulty locating one, although they are hardly common.

Rarity in Mint State: I estimate that five to 10 are known, mostly hovering around MS-60 to 61, some of which could just as likely be called high grade AU.

Hoards: The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded several dozen specimens ranging in grade from EF to Mint State, with AU being the norm.

Dies and die varieties: Four (or six) 1861 obverse dies and eight reverse dies were shipped to San Francisco on November 1860, the reverses being of the Paquet type (see following listing). In June 1861 four more pairs were sent, the reverses being of the standard (not Paquet) style. In addition, reverses of the standard style may have been on hand from earlier times. • Medium S mintmark.

1861-S Paquet Reverse $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

1861-S $20 with Paquet Reverse (tall letters around the border). This design, by Anthony C. Paquet, was used only for a short time, as it was felt that the narrow rim would cause the dies to break after only a small amount of use. (King of Siam Sale)

Mintage: 19,250.

Rarity in circulated grades: Several hundred 1861-S Paquet double eagles are known, most of which grade in the Very Fine to Extremely Fine range, although a few lustrous AU coins exist.[1] VF seems to be the standard grade for the 1861-S Paquet.

[1] *The Numismatist*, March 1937 page 199. "A $20 Gold Coin with Pattern Reverse." Walter H. Breen, "A Survey of American Coin Hoards," *The Numismatist*, January 1952.

and I estimate that 90% of known specimens are of this designation.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Paquet's reverse die with tall letters around the border. Apparently, eight reverse dies of this style were shipped from Philadelphia to San Francisco in November 1860, but only two of these dies were used, differing slightly in the position of the S mintmark.

Notes: Anthony C. Paquet, assistant engraver at the Mint, produced a new reverse die, with tall letters, intended for use in making business strike double eagles.[1] On January 5, 1861, at the Philadelphia Mint it was decided that the use of this style would be discontinued for the rim was too narrow. Examples on hand in Philadelphia were destroyed, save for only two specimens, one of which went into circulation and the other to the collection of Alexander D. Bache.[2]

Instructions to discontinue the use of the Paquet dies and to revert to the old style were sent to San Francisco by telegraph to St. Joseph (the western terminus of the telegraph line), and from there by overland express. Charles H. Hempstead, superintendent, replied to the instructions on February 9, 1861 (excerpt):

> I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 5th, "overland," which however did not come to hand until the 2nd [of February]. I was, therefore, unable to prevent the striking and issuing of a large number of double eagles, coined with the new dies. The amount issued was $385,000.

Thus, 19,250 1861-S Paquet reverse double eagles were coined, apparently without any difficulty regarding the narrow rim. Rather than melt the remaining pieces on hand, as no problem was perceived with them, they were released as called for by depositors.

No contemporary [illegible] the distinctive Paquet reverse [illegible] 1861-S [illegible] in print in any contemporary [illegible] catalogue, or book. W. Elliot Woodward, who sold the Bache Collection [illegible] *Philadelphia Mint* Paquet $20 in 1865, was aware of the die differences, but expressed no knowledge of a San Francisco Mint counterpart.[3]

In March 1937 [illegible] collecting $20 coins by mint [illegible] numismatists were [illegible] a new variety 1861-S $20 gold coin that came to light [illegible] other United States gold pieces [illegible] unlike the [illegible] double eagle [illegible] letters on the [illegible] taller and narrower than usual. The editor of *The Numismatist* consulted a copy of the 1913 work on pattern coins by Edgar H. Adams and William H. Woodin and [illegible] pattern made in Philadelphia. There [illegible] San Francisco regular issue coins. He concluded that the 1861-S was [illegible] pattern made in San Francisco [illegible] based upon the [illegible] mintmark. However, as we know today, the Paquet reverse [illegible] coin collectors searched their holdings [illegible] quantities of $20 gold coins became available from [illegible] it was found that the 1861-S Paquet reverse $20 was rare, but hardly unique.

In the 1950s Paul H. Wittlin, an American who traveled [illegible] in Europe [illegible] at the behest of Dayton, Ohio, dealer James Kelly [illegible] found about 25 to 30 pieces in bank holdings in France and Swiss banks, these [illegible] VF and EF.

Mints Use California Gold

1861: Total California gold metal production: $41,884,995; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $12,206,383.

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $426,808.

Dahlonega Mint use of California gold: $4,213.[4]

New Orleans Mint use of California gold: $19,932.[5]

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $19,227,658.

Notes: So much California gold was being processed by the New York City Assay Office that the Chamber of Commerce of New York, under date of December 5, 1861, petitioned Congress to allow the Assay Office to strike coins, instead of forwarding metal to Philadelphia.[6] It was stated that the shipping costs to send $1,000 in gold bullion from New York to the Philadelphia Mint was 1/10th of 1%, or $1 (for silver bullion it was $3). The matter was considered further in a House of Representatives document, May 15, 1862, but no affirmative action was ever taken.[7]

Southern Branch Mints Close

In 1861 the city of New Orleans was seized by troops of the State of Louisiana and was subsequently occupied by Confederate forces for the next year, effectively ending coinage there. The mints at Charlotte and Dahlonega fell under Confederate control and in due course were shuttered. Although a few gold coins were struck by the Confederates from bullion on hand, no serious effort was made to operate the acquired mints on a regular basis. Thus, by late spring 1861 the only two functioning federal mints were at Philadelphia and San Francisco.

[1] Paquet was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1814, probably the son of Toussaint François Paquet, a bronze worker in that city. He came to America in 1848, and in the mid-1850s had an engraving shop in New York City. Paquet did contract work for the Mint in early 1857, and on October 20 of that year joined the Mint staff as an assistant engraver. He remained in that post through early 1864, after which he returned to the private sector, but continued to do important commissions for the government, including two designs for Indian Peace medals. Paquet furnished the letter punches for certain patterns and possibly regular coins as well, one recorded shipment arriving in late May 1857, although he could have done earlier work as well. Apparently the same engraver made up punches for various denominations including the dime, quarter, and half dollar. However, these fonts were not used at the time for circulating coinage. His coinage work at the Mint included numerous patterns as well as several regular issue dies, among the latter being the short-lived modified obverse for the 1859 Liberty Seated half dime (Philadelphia Mint only).

[2] Coins from the Bache Collection were auctioned by Roxbury, MA, dealer W. Elliot Woodward on March 20-25 and December 19, 1865.

[3] Lot 2818 of the March 20-25, 1865, sale: "1861 $20. This piece differs from the ordinary variety in the arrangement of the stars over the head of the eagle, and is said to be unique; perfectly Uncirculated." Generations later this same coin, gem Mint State, went into the Norweb Collection.

[4] Coined February 28, 1861, after which the Mint fell into the hands of the Confederacy.

[5] Up to January 31, 1861, after which the Mint fell into the hands of the Confederacy.

[6] 37th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate, Misc. Doc. No. 7.

[7] 37th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Report No. 106.

Gold Coins Sold for Premium

Meanwhile, from reserves in New York City the Treasury Department had been selling gold coins to brokers, investors, merchants needing coins for customs payments, etc. A Treasury report dated April 11, 1868, noted that from March 2, 1861, to March 18, 1868, gold coins amounting to $200,325,856 had been sold for $293,783,360 in paper money, and that commissions on the sales had been paid to the extent of $231,650, also in paper money.[1]

Some sales made during periods of great devaluation of Legal Tender notes yielded a great premium in paper money, such as a sale of $780,000 face value in gold coins to Ketcham, Son & Co. for $1,840,837.50 in paper money.

Although the Treasury Department was the largest "dealer" of all, trading in Legal Tender notes and gold coins took place in most American cities. Bullion dealers and exchanges posted prices for converting one medium into the other. Silver coins were also traded.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1862)

History and Commentary

In 1862 the coinage situation was in a turmoil in Philadelphia—what with hoarding of silver and gold coins in the East and Midwest and with the branch mints closed in those areas—but in San Francisco it was business as usual.

For reasons unrelated to the situation in the East, the silver mintage in the West was higher than usual, no doubt from an influx of silver from the Comstock Lode area of Nevada (although most Nevada silver was exported). Apparently, the "mother mint" in Philadelphia anticipated an even greater San Francisco coinage than took place, for large numbers of dies were sent from there, many of which were not used.

1862-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 180,750.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S dime is a key issue in any grade from Good upward. Walter Breen (1988) noted that in EF grade the 1862-S is "prohibitively rare."

Rarity in Mint State: A few Mint State 1862-S dimes exist and are apt to come on the market only when specialized collections are dispersed. Similar to other dimes of this era, the incredible rarity of the 1862-S is unexplained. The Eliasberg Collection coin was a remarkable MS-66.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: 10 obverse dies were shipped from the die shop in Philadelphia to the San Francisco Mint. Apparently, it was anticipated that a very large coinage would materialize from Comstock Lode silver from Nevada.

1862-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 67,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S quarter dollar is usually seen in low grades such as G, VG, and Fine, and is scarce as such. Examples are even harder to find in VF or EF grades, and AU coins are very rare.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1862-S is exceedingly rare in Mint State. The finest seen by the writer is the MS-66 Eliasberg coin, after which the general availability falls off to the lower numerical ranges. Probably somewhere between 10 and 15 Mint State pieces exist, certainly a low number for a Civil War era silver coin.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Eight obverse dies were sent from Philadelphia for this year's coinage, although it seems that just two were used (cf. Briggs). No new reverse dies were needed. • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark on those seen.

1862-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 1,352,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S half dollar is readily obtainable in worn grades due in large part to the record high mintage.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1862-S half dollar is slightly scarce in Mint State and even scarcer if gem, although it does not take a great deal of effort to find a nice MS-63. Many eye-appealing coins exist as part of a population estimated in the range of 50 to 100 pieces.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard No. 1 (see 1860-S above). • Another hoard is reflected in Superior's sale of May 1996, which comprised the Irving Goodman holding of Liberty Seated half dollars brought back from Hong Kong in the early 1960s. All coins were described as being "either cleaned or damaged." A few were chopmarked, but most were not. The offering included the following San Francisco half dollars from the period under study (1855-1865) with those of 1862-S being the most numerous: 1858-S (2); 1859-S (1); 1860-S (4); 1861-S (19); 1862-S (20); 1863-S (15 plus 1 chopmarked); 1864-S (4 plus 1 chopmarked); and 1865-S (8).

Dies and die varieties: 10 obverse dies were shipped for the 1862-S coinage. Two reverse dies were sent from Philadelphia in April 1862. Wiley and Bugert (1993) have verified the use of five different obverse and five different reverse dies. • Three mintmark sizes are known for this year. For the first time the Type II reverse (see discussion under 1858-S) is used. • Large S (1.65 mm.) mintmark, Type I reverse, is the variety usually seen. • Medium S (1.4 mm.) mintmark, Type I reverse. • Small, round S (1.1 mm., defective at top), Type II reverse, the first use of this style in the San Francisco half dollar series. Rare.

Silver bars: $1,279 value.

1862-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 8,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Very scarce in all grades due to its low mintage. VF is about average, although a few EF and AU coins have appeared in sales. Most "name" collections have had EF or AU coins.

Rarity in Mint State: Only two or three Mint State coins are believed to exist, and these are around MS-6[illegible] or MS-6[illegible].

Hoards: None.

[1] 40th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, [illegible]

Dies and die varieties: Two 1862-dated obverse dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint in November 1861.

1862-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 9,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S $5 is very rare in all grades up to and including VF and EF. For many years the 1862-S was considered to be nonexistent above EF. Today a handful of AU pieces have been certified, either representing new discoveries or, perhaps, grading optimism; in addition, the single coin retrieved from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* is in this grade. A sleeper at all levels.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Two obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in April, but only one is known to have been used. • Small S mintmark on those seen.

1862-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 12,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S eagle is rare in all grades. VF seems to be the peak of the distribution curve, with fewer known Fine or EF. A few scattered AU coins have passed through the grading services.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Six obverse dies were shipped to the San Francisco Mint, but were mostly unused. The supply of reverse dies on hand remained sufficient. • Large S [illegible] mintmark.

1862-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

A lightly circulated 1862-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*.

Mintage: 854,173.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1862-S is readily available in VF grade, somewhat following the situation of the 1861-S (regular, not Paquet reverse). EF and AU coins are in sufficient supply that the specialist can find one without undue difficulty.

Rarity in Mint State: In Mint State the 1862-S is very rare, and probably no more than five to 10 exist, most of which are closer to MS-60 than to MS-65. In this grade, the 1862-S is the rarest $20 in the present study (1854-1865).

Hoards: The S.S. *Brother Jonathan* yielded several dozen specimens ranging from AU (mostly) to Mint State.

Dies and die varieties: In November 1861 four 1862-dated obverse dies were sent to San Francisco, followed by six more in April 1862. Old reverse dies were used. • Medium S mintmark on all coins seen.

Mints Use California Gold

1862: Total California gold metal production: $38,854,668; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $14,029,760 (*plus* $822,823 in gold parted from deposits of *silver,* the latter including out-of-state origin).[1]

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $244,260.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $11,580,648.

Notes: From this year onward to the 1870s the Philadelphia Mint did not pay out gold coins at par. As demand was reduced, mintages trended to lower numbers. A large amount of gold was sent to the New York City Assay Office despite the risk of interception by Confederate raiders at sea.

Other Gold to San Francisco

1862: Sources of gold used at the San Francisco Mint *other than California gold*:

Colorado gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $680.

Nevada gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $13,000.

Oregon gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $888,000. Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Paper Money Depreciation

1862: Face value amount in Legal Tender notes that could be purchased with $100 in gold:

Low for year: $101.00 (January).

High for year: $136.50 (October).[2]

Report on Southern Mints

The *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint* for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1862, told of certain dormant branch mints:

> No reports have been received from the branches at New Orleans, Dahlonega, or Charlotte. Although New Orleans is now, and has been for some months, in the possession of the Union forces [who retook the city from the Confederates], yet the operations of the Branch Mint in that city have not been resumed; nor is it expedient or necessary that they should be.
>
> No consideration of public or private interest would, under the most favorable circumstances justify the reopening [af-

[1] In general, native California gold contained silver as an extra metal, an "impurity." In Nevada the converse was true, and silver contained gold as an extra metal. It is not generally realized that in the 1860s and 1870s the Comstock Lode in Nevada, famous for its silver, yielded about an equal value in gold.

[2] These and other Legal Tender note statistics through 1865 are from Thomas P. Kettell, *Complete History of the Great American Rebellion*, Vol. II, 1865, p. 1018.

> to the war] of the branches at Dahlonega or Charlotte. They ought not to have been established; and having been the source of useless expenditure, they should not, even in the event of the states in which they are respectively located, returning to their allegiance, be again employed for minting purposes. Whether gold or silver coins were struck at any of the defected branches of the Mint during the past year, I have not been able to ascertain with certainty: if any, the amount was small.
>
> Prior to the defection of the branch at New Orleans, the dies in that institution were defaced, or destroyed by some of the local employees, under the direction of one of the officers who remained true to his duty and to his country.[1] This destruction of the dies must have delayed, if not altogether prevented any coinage at that branch.

As circumstances developed, the Charlotte and Dahlonega mints would never again strike coins, but the New Orleans Mint would resume coinage operations in 1879, continuing until 1909.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1863)

History and Commentary

The silver half dime was struck in San Francisco for the first time, but it did not prove to be a popular denomination, and it is likely that many if not most were exported. On the Pacific Coast most transactions were valued at a minimum of 25, as they had been since the days of the Forty Niners.

Although it was anticipated that quarter dollars would be struck in 1863, and four obverse dies with this date were shipped from Philadelphia in November 1862, no coinage of this denomination materialized.

On March 9, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln wrote to his longtime friend Dr. Anson G. Henry (who on July 28, 1865 would be a passenger on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*):

> I know not except the Secretary of the Treasury tells me the report shows that Mr. Stevens has already had a full hearing of the charges and evidence. The report is to be shown to me.
> A. Lincoln.

On the back of a letter from Henry, same date, this was noted by Lincoln:

> I have just heard from Stevens of the Mint. He asks for a copy of the charges against him, and promises to disprove them so far as they affect his integrity & management of the Mint, if a little time is allowed him.

Superintendent Robert J. Stevens is said to have "appointed or retained in office dishonest or vicious men."[2] Stevens was removed from his office and on June 30 was replaced as superintendent by Robert B. Swain, who remained the post until July 31, 1869. Swain, an insurance agent and commission merchant, was well regarded in the city. He was prominent in social causes and was active in the affairs of the local Unitarian Church. Among his acquaintances was Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain") who worked as a reported for the *Call* newspaper in the same building where the superintendent's office was located, next-door to the Mint.

The problem of employee honesty was a continuing one and was not made any better by the Mint payroll being made in Legal Tender notes of depreciated value.

1863-S 5¢ Silver (Half Dime)

1863-S half dime, the first issue of this denomination from the San Francisco Mint. (Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection)

Mintage: 100,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Slightly scarce in all grades. It is likely that most were sent to China.

Rarity in Mint State: Scarce in Mint State, very rare in gem preservation.

Hoards: Walter Breen mentions that a small hoard of 10 to 20 each of AU and Mint State 1863-S and 1864-S (and some 1866-S) half dimes, some cleaned, came to light in New York City in 1968.[3] This group is not significant in view of the market, and today the pieces have been widely dispersed. • Many years ago the writer had a group of several hundred San Francisco Mint half dimes of the 1863 to 1872 years which had come back from China. Each had some silver scraped away at the center of the Liberty Seated figure on the obverse, a location where its removal would not be immediately noticed.

Dies and die varieties: For the anticipated 1863 half dime coinage three pairs of dies were shipped from Philadelphia in November 1862.

1863-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 157,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: Where did they all go? Today, the 1863-S dime is very scarce in any and all grades. When seen—and that is not often—the 1863-S is apt to be in low grades.

Rarity in Mint State: Only a handful of pieces exist. Any coin with a legitimate claim to choice or gem Mint State is a first-class rarity.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Seven obverse dies but no reverse dies were sent from Philadelphia this year.

Notes: The explanation for the rarity of 1863-S is unknown. Export to China seems to be the most likely possibility.

[1] This information is incorrect, as after seizure by Confederate forces, coinage of 1861-O half dollars was continued for a short time.
[2] *New York Tribune*, March 11, 1863.
[3] *Encyclopedia*, 1988, p. 294.

1863-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 916,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1863-S half dollar is plentiful in worn grades, especially from Good to Fine or VF.

Rarity in Mint State: Probably 60 to 100 Mint State coins are known, mostly at lower levels. Any coin *really* MS-64 or finer (such as the Pryor specimen) is a significant rarity.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard No. 1 (see 1860-S above).

Dies and die varieties: In this year 12 obverse dies and five reverse dies were shipped. Wiley and Bugert (1993) state that three pairs were used. • Small, broad S (1.1 mm., broken at top) mintmark, Type II reverse.

Silver bars: $224,764 value.

1863-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 10,800.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1863-S quarter eagle is scarce in any grade. VF is the norm for auction appearances, although occasional EF and AU pieces enter the record books.

Rarity in Mint State: Perhaps three to five Mint State coins exist. The finest may be the MS-65 Eliasberg Collection coin (sold in 1982) and a similar piece in the Mid-American Rare Coin Galleries sale of May 1992.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: All with small S mintmark and Type I reverse as used through and including 1876.

Notes: Most specimens show evidence of light striking.

1863-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 17,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Scarce in all grades, with VF being the norm. An occasional EF specimen appears on the market, and AU examples are very rare. Breen (1978): "Presumably rare above VF." The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded three examples in EF and AU grades.

Rarity in Mint State: [illegible]

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Two 1863 obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1862. • Only one reverse die variety has been seen, this with large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark.

1863-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 10,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1863-S eagle is rare in all grades. The usually seen specimen is VF, less usual EF. AU coins are exceedingly rare, and until the 1980s seem to have been unknown in this grade. The Norweb Collection (1988) example was AU-55.

Rarity in Mint State: Breaking the "impossible" string of S-Mint $10s that are nonexistent in Mint State, the 1863-S is known to the extent of two or three lower grade Mint State pieces hovering around the MS-60 and MS-61 level.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1863 obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1862. • Breen (1988): "Only one obverse die variety is known, with the date low and nearly central below the neck, in contrast with Philadelphia issues on which the date is far to the right." • Medium S mintmark.

Mint State 1863-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

1863-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mintage: 966,570.

Rarity in circulated grades: The availability of the 1863-S double eagle is not much different from that of the preceding two years: VF is the norm, but EF and AU coins can be found without undue difficulty.

Rarity in Mint State: 15 to 25 Mint State 1863-S double eagles are estimated to exist, mostly in lower grades such as MS-60 to MS-62. Today, this ranks as the second rarest (1862-S takes top honors) Mint State double eagle in the present study of coins dated 1854-1865.

Hoards: The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded dozens of specimens in AU (mostly) and Mint State grades; Appendix II gives an inventory.

Dies and die varieties: Four 1863-dated obverses were sent to San Francisco in November 1862 and six more in the following March. Old reverses were used. • Medium S mintmark is the style usually seen; the small S is much rarer.

Mints Use California Gold

1863: Total California gold metal production: $23,501,736; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $13,045,712 (*plus* $1,108,467 in gold parted from deposits of *silver*, the latter including out-of-state origin).

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $109,779.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $346,245.

Notes: Most gold was used at San Francisco. Very little metal was employed at either the Philadelphia Mint or the New York City Assay Office, no doubt because shipment by sea involved danger of intervention by Confederate raiders.

Other Gold to San Francisco

1863: Sources of gold used at the San Francisco Mint *other than California gold:*

Colorado gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $59,472.

Nevada gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $11,250.

Oregon gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $3,001,104.

Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Dakota Territory gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $5,760.

Washington Territory gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $12,672. Some of this metal may have been brought from Portland to San Francisco on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Paper Money Depreciation

1863: Face value amount in Legal Tender notes that could be purchased with $100 in gold:

Low for year: $122.50 (August).

High for year: $172.50 (February).

Conditions at the San Francisco Mint

A communication datelined San Francisco, October 10, 1863, printed in *The Congressional Globe,* April 29, 1864, included this:

> We beg leave to address you upon the subject of the branch mint in this city and the inadequate facilities therein for the accommodation of the public and the requirements of the government.
>
> When the present branch was established in 1853 it was supposed that the maximum yearly coinage would be about $5,000,000. The capacity of the building was regulated accordingly. With the rapid development of the mineral resources of this state and the adjoining territories, the business of the mint has increased in like proportion. One half of the estimated yearly coinage of 1853 was coined in the single month of September last. And yet the accommodations have not been increased, the working room has not been enlarged, and the operations of the mint, which now are nearly six times greater than the original estimate, are necessarily conducted within the limited compass of a building which at the outset even was too inconvenient and contracted.
>
> Situated in a block upon one of the most narrow streets of the city, the building is dark, exceedingly hot at all times, and unhealthy for the workmen. Gas is required throughout the building every hour of the day. It has no storehouse accommodations whatever; acids, wood, and coal can only be received in very small quantities. A warehouse for articles in constant use in the operations of the mint is necessarily rented at a remote location. The office of the superintendent, instead of being upon the spot where he can exercise constantly a personal supervision of the business of the department, is elsewhere. Neither the coiner assayer, nor melter and refiner has an office, or even decent writing accommodations.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1864)

History and Commentary

Production of coins in San Francisco in 1864 included all silver denominations from the half dime to the half dollar and the higher gold values of $5, $10, and $20. In keeping with tradition and practice, and driven by market demand, the large $20 double eagle continued to be the coin of choice, and more were made of these than of any other denomination. The production of $5 and $10 coins was minuscule.

Continuing the situation in effect since early 1861, there were just two mints in operation in the United States: Philadelphia and San Francisco. There was a major problem involving a combination of delayed payment of Mint employees and the continuing depreciation in purchasing power of the Legal Tender notes in which they were paid. Mass resignations were threatened, but were averted by Director Robert B. Swain (in actions subsequently noted in the following text).

1864-S 5¢ Silver (Half Dime)

Mintage: 90,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Examples of the 1864-S half dime are slightly scarce, with F and VF being typical grades. Many of these pieces were shipped to the Orient, possibly as souvenirs by Chinese, or for use as buttons, or domestically for use as cuff links, jewelry, etc. Breen (1988) states that *over half* all known survivors are ex-jewelry coins!

Rarity in Mint State: Many Mint State coins exist, mainly in lower levels such as MS-60 to MS-62, often cleaned. Unimpaired MS-65 coins are rare.

Hoards: A small hoard of up to 20 AU and Mint State 1864-S half dimes, some with evidence of cleaning, came to light in New York City in 1968 and was seen by Walter Breen in 1971, at which time there were 14 pieces on hand.[1] Today, these have been widely dispersed and single pieces are scarce.

Dies and die varieties: Two die pairs for 1864-S coinage were shipped from Philadelphia in October 1863.

1864-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 230,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Examples of the 1864-S dime are somewhat elusive in worn grades, especially at EF or AU.

Rarity in Mint State: Several dozen or more Mint State coins exist, some of which are at the choice and gem level. Still, in absolute terms examples are rare.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four pairs of dies for the 1864 coinage were shipped to San Francisco in October 1863.

1864-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 20,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1864-S quarter is very rare in any and all grades. Nearly all known examples are well worn with Good or VG being about par. Any coin with a clear claim to EF or finer is a rarity.

[1] *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins,* 1988, p. 294.

Rarity in Mint State: The 1864-S is a formidable rarity at any Mint State level, and even an MS-60 would be a prize. The MS-66 Eliasberg Collection coin is the finest known and is remarkable as such.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies were shipped on October 1863. No reverses were sent, and leftovers were used. One obverse die (with partly repunched date) and two reverse dies (one rare)[1] are known to have been used. Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark.

1864-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 658,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Worn examples are at least two or three times as hard to find as for the preceding two years and are much scarcer than the lower mintage would suggest.

Rarity in Mint State: Uncirculated 1864-S half dollars are very rare, and perhaps only 10 to 20 exist, of which only a few are gems. The true rarity of the Mint State 1864-S is largely unappreciated, but a review of the auction catalogues of great collections sold in the past will quickly reveal its elusive character. An exception is the Douglas L. Noblet Collection (1999) MS-66, a remarkable coin.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard No. 1 (see 1860-S above).

Dies and die varieties: 11 obverse and five reverse dies were sent to San Francisco. Four obverse and four reverse dies were actually used (Wiley and Bugert, 1993). • Large S mintmark (1.61 mm., from the 1.65 mm. punch used earlier, but in this instance lightly impressed into the die, making it smaller), Type I reverse. • Small, broad S mintmark, Type II reverse. At least two dies known, with the mintmark broken at the top on one die, perfect on the other. • Small, narrow S mintmark, Type II reverse. Rare.

Silver bars: $120,909 value.

1864-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 3,888.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1864-S half eagle is very rare in all grades, as indeed the mintage suggests. Here is one of the great key issues among nineteenth-century gold coins. When seen, specimens are apt to be VF or EF.

Rarity in Mint State: Only one Mint State coin has been reported, the Melish Collection specimen (A. Kosoff, 1956) sold for $70 to Emery May Holden Norweb. This specimen was later auctioned in 1987 by Bowers and Merena for $110,000, prompting several comments concerning the marvelous aspects of [illegible] ("a fine collection is your best investment"?).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Two 1864-dated obverses were shipped to Philadelphia in October 1863, but only one seems to have been used. • Large S mintmark.

1864-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Mintage: 2,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1864-S eagle is of nearly *legendary* proportions, although this fact is hidden from all who do not delve into specialized references. Breen (1988) commented: "possibly 10 to 12 known. Usually seen in low grades, unknown above EF." Notwithstanding the preceding, a few have been certified as AU in the past decade. A specimen in the Mid-American sale of May 1992, earlier in Superior's sale of the Heifetz Collection, was catalogued as AU-50.

Rarity in Mint State: None known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Three obverse dies dated 1864 were shipped to San Francisco in November 1863, but only one seems to have been used. • Medium S mintmark.

Notes: In terms of availability, the 1864-S $10 mounts a serious challenge to the very famous 1854-S $2.50 (see earlier description), but because of an almost complete absence of publicity in the past, the 1864-S has sold for nominal prices.

The little gold coin that caused so much excitement: This sparkling Mint State 1864-S $5 sold for $70 in the Melish Collection (1956) and was later auctioned for a breathtaking $110,000 in the Norweb Collection.

1864-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

Mint State 1864-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Mintage: 793,660.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1864-S double eagle is one of the scarcer issues of the era. When worn pieces are encountered they are apt to be VF or, less often, EF. AU coins have appeared only occasionally and have been absent from even the "name" collections, for the most part.

Rarity in Mint State: Prior to the recovery of coins from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* Mint State coins were great rarities, with only about five to 10 believed to exist, most of these being in lower ranges such as MS-60 to MS-62.

Hoards: The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* yielded dozens of specimens in AU (mostly) and Mint State grades; Appendix II gives an inventory.

Today, Mint State coins must be ranked as collectible, a sea change (pun intended) from the days of 1982 when David W. Akers commented: "The 1864-S is quite rare by S-Mint stan-

[1] Rare "Reverse B," called "transitional," was discovered by Larry Briggs on August 31, 1991 (it is nice to be so specific!), and has the claws very close and compact, second berry touches leaf, left talon touches first berry.

dards and is on the second level of rarity along with such other dates as the 1854-S, 1860-S, 1861-S, 1862-S, 1866-S Motto, 1867-S and 1868-S. Almost the entire known population of 1864-S double eagles grades only VF or EF. Strictly graded AU specimens are decidedly rare and true Mint State pieces are very rare. If a choice or Gem Unc. [MS-64 or 65] 1864-S exists, I have not seen it. In terms of rarity according to average grade, the 1864-S is one of the rarest dates in the entire double eagle series ranking seventh out of the 204 issues."

Dies and die varieties: Five 1864-dated obverses were shipped to San Francisco in October 1863, followed by six more in May 1864. Reverses were already on hand from earlier years. Small S mintmark.

Mints Use California Gold

1864: Total California gold metal production: $24,071,423; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $14,863,658 (*plus* $220,890 in gold parted from deposits of *silver*, the latter including out-of-state origin).

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $91,664.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $116,101.

Notes: Similar to the preceding year, most California gold was used at San Francisco. Very little metal was employed at either the Philadelphia Mint or the New York City Assay Office, no doubt because shipment by sea involved danger of intervention by Confederate raiders.

Other Gold to San Francisco

1864: Sources of gold used at the San Francisco Mint *other than California gold:*

Oregon gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $2,139,305. Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Idaho Territory gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $1,257,498. Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

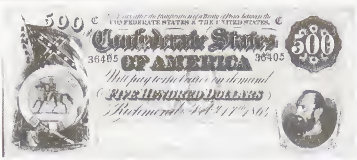
Paper Money Depreciation

1864: Face value amount in Legal Tender notes that could be purchased with $100 in gold:

Low for year: $151.50 (January).

High for year: $285.00 (July; this is the all-time high for the Civil War).[1]

Confederate paper: By July 1864 in the South the value of Confederate paper money had depreciated dramatically, and $100 face value in rebel notes was worth just $4.60 in federal silver coins. As accounts of Yankees in Confederate prisoner of war camps reveal, there was a great desire on the part of camp guards for Union paper money and coins, this being strictly off the record, and whenever prisoners received federal money from friends in the North, it could be exchanged for goods and favors.



Impressive in denomination and appearance, this Confederate States of America $500 note of 1864 was worth relatively little in terms of either Union greenbacks or gold coins. In fact, by July 1864 a $500 note from the South was exchangeable for only $22.40 in silver coins. (Morgan, et al. Collections)

A View of the San Francisco Mint

In autumn 1864 the following were among the officers and more important staff members at the San Francisco Mint:[2]

Robert M. Swain, superintendent. D.W. Cheesman, treasurer. Benjamin G. Martin, assayer. H.H. Lawrence, assistant assayer. Walter S. Denio, melter and refiner. John M. Eckfeldt, assistant melter and refiner. William Schmolz, coiner. Adolphus Schmolz, assistant coiner. William Macy, cashier. J.B. Scotchler, bookkeeper.[3] John H. Beardsley, abstract clerk. James H. Gills, computing clerk. Joseph P. Cochran, weigh clerk. J.N. Souther, receipt clerk. C.S. Cousens, superintendent's clerk. Frank B. Harte (known widely as author Bret Harte), secretary. Certain functions of the Mint, including the office of the superintendent and the storage of many supplies, were conducted in leased premises in buildings other than the Mint structure.

Mark Twain-iana

In the summer of 1864 Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain") was a reporter for the San Francisco *Call*, located in the same building adjacent to the San Francisco Mint where Superintendent Robert B. Swain had his offices in rented premises. Clemens came to know Swain, and at one time was cordially invited to dinner at the superintendent's home.[4] The following newspaper clippings from the *Call* reflect upon Clemens' view of Mint and related activities at the time.

[1] The $285 figure is from R.W. Julian (letter, December 2?, 1999); another source states $290. No doubt, [illegible] from [illegible] and from broker to broker.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864, p. 34.

[3] At the same time, Scotchler was secretary of Merchants' Mutual Marine Insurance Co., an insurer of cargo aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in July 1865.

[4] This and the quoted items attributed to Clemens [illegible] are from *Clemens of the Call*, edited by Edgar M. Branch, 1969 [illegible], pp. 227-231 and related endnotes.

(Custom House Resignations) July 31, 1864

Yesterday afternoon, the deputy collector, auditor, and 15 other Custom House officers sent in their resignations, assigning as a reason for doing so, that with greenbacks at the present rates, (40), their wages were less than those received by day laborers, and being inadequate to defray the expense of living, they were compelled to resign. Custom House salaries are not very heavy, even when paid in gold. We are informed that the Collector telegraphed to Washington at once concerning the matter.

Greenbacks Refused (August 2, 1864)

Last Saturday, eleven inspectors in the barge office of the Custom House received a call from the Poll-tax Collector, and they tendered their indebtedness in the kind of money their salaries are paid in—greenbacks. The Collector said he was not allowed to take anything but coin, and the inspectors said they would suffer imprisonment before they would pay in anything but greenbacks.

The soundness of this position will be appreciated when you come to reflect that they only get four dollars a day, anyhow, and when that sum is mashed into greenbacks at present rates, it only amounts to about a dollar and a half a day. Now, estimating their actual living expenses at a dollar and forty-five cents a day—and it cannot fall below that while they continue to eat anything—how long would it take one of those inspectors to pay this oppressive Poll-tax in coin our of the clear profits of his labor? Why, it would take two months and three weeks, as nearly as you could come at it; as the amount of the tax is four dollars.

Meanwhile, at the Treasury Offices (August 4, 1864)

Even though Custom House clerks, Mint employees, and others were suffering in California as a result of the extreme depreciation of Legal Tender notes, worth about 40 on the dollar, 2,500 miles away in Washington, D.C., Salmon P. Chase, secretary of the Treasury, had no problems keeping up appearances, per Clemens.

> Secretary Chase's private offices at Washington are fitted with [illegible] carpets, gilded cornices, silver furniture, and other luxurious surroundings which go to make about a Cabinet Minister [illegible] to the unaccustomed outsider.
>
> Five minutes after a Custom House clerk (in San Francisco) had read this item, and with the recollection of it still upon him, he was paid his monthly salary in greenbacks, and the consequence was he lost his temper, and became profane to a degree [illegible].

Miseries at the Mint (August 10, 1864)

When the Branch Mint was established in this city, it was upon the calculation that its annual coinage would amount to about five millions. Upon that supposition its organization as to number of officials, accommodation, and the pay of the employees was fixed. Although the coinage has about quadrupled what was calculated upon, neither accommodations, employees nor compensation have been increased. On the contrary, the pay is now in greenbacks instead of gold, and the payment often delayed, as at present, for four months, through inefficiency on the part of someone in Washington.

However, Congress made an appropriation at its last session for a new Mint here, and we hope that something may come of it different from the present miserable kennel called a Mint, and that something may also be done for the relief of the unpaid men and women who perform the labors of the institution. Herewith we give a synopsis of the business done by the Branch Mint in this city for the last 12 months. It will be seen that, instead of five, the coinage has been nearly 20 millions. [Here was inserted a statement of San Francisco Mint operations for the two most recent fiscal years.]

More Mint Trouble (September 25, 1864)

A report is abroad that the Branch Mint is about to close—that the employees, being no longer able to support themselves and families on the mere prospect of getting the salaries due them paid some day or other, have given notice that unless their accounts are previously squared, they will quit work in a body on the 30th instant. These reports were note without foundation. We are glad to be able to state, however, that the Mint is not going to stop, nor the men be allowed to suffer much longer for the moneys due them. Within two weeks, or at farthest, three, all cause of complaint will be removed, and the employees themselves have been satisfied of this fact. We get our information at headquarters.

More Hard Times at the Mint (October 2, 1864)

All of the officials in the Mint have, for the last six months, had a hard time of it, and some of them a very hard one. For six months they had received nothing until yesterday, although there has been money enough here to pay a portion of their demands. Some technical objection on the part of the Treasurer, Mr. Cheesman, is said to have been the cause.[1]

Latterly, Mr. Swain, the Superintendent, after long effort, succeeded in getting a positive order to use any money to the credit of the Mint in the payment of the officials. As Treasury Notes have fallen very much since a portion of their pay was due, Mr. Swain, having authority, allowed the payrolls to be made out in such amounts as would make up to the recipients an amount in gold at present prices of greenbacks equal to what their pay would have been if received when due. This is strictly just. Most of the officials were thus paid three months' salaries of the six due. But two of the unfortunate clerks chance to be the appointees of the Treasurer, who objected to pay their salaries unless the additions mentioned were abated.

Mr. Swain declined to thus make out their payrolls, knowing that if thus paid they would resign. They are faithful, honest, competent, and he cannot at once, if at all, supply their places. If they resign, the operations of the Mint must stop for awhile, at least, and they cannot afford to remain for the pay insisted upon by Mr. Cheesman. The result yesterday was, that after waiting six months for their pay, they left the Mint, not having received a dollar. They are poor men, we hear, and greatly need their pay. If the operations of the Mint should cease tomorrow we presume it will be because Mr. Cheesman desired to make capital with the Secretary at the expense of Mr. Swain, by showing that *his* appointees can be forced to submit to any loss which his own pertinacious technicalities have caused. The treatment of these men is not only unjust by cruel, and the effect upon the public will probably be great inconvenience and loss to all who have dealings with the Mint.

[1] Cheesman, who advocated the use of Legal Tender notes in general circulation in California, was intensely disliked by Clemens. In 1866, Cheesman's brother-in-law, William Macy, cashier at the Mint, absconded with $39,000; one can imagine Clemens saying "I told you so."

Swain: "Standing on a volcano"

The following is reflective of the situation reported in the *Call* by Samuel L. Clemens:

> In April, greenback notes had been worth 63% of face value, but by September they had dropped to just 40% of face, according to Swain, a fine gentleman once described by Clemens as "a merchant prince of pure reputation." Superintendent Robert B. Swain, while active in the private sector, held down his office as superintendent at the Mint. Employees threatened to resign if payment plus an adjustment for depreciation were not made by September 30. To circumvent this possibility, Superintendent Swain informed Director James Pollock in Philadelphia[1] as follows: "Aware of the justice of their demands I accordingly ordered that the payroll be prepared at the rate of increase which would correspond with the depreciation of currency."

Swain went on to say that the payment of wages in depreciated currency could not continue if the Mint expected to retain competent people "of well-tried character, honesty, and capacity." Indeed, dishonest employees had been a major problem for some time. He also addressed the political situation in California:

> There is another reason why it is desirable and essential to the public peace that the claims of the men should be met and the public business not be interrupted. A political aspect of affairs in this state is very unsatisfactory. As one of the Committee of Public Safety of 13 gentlemen I have means of information possessed by but few, and I exaggerate nothing in saying that here we are standing on a volcano.
>
> The secessionists in this state, so peculiarly adopted to guerrilla warfare, are confident and exultant over their prospects. They claim that they can and will carry the state. They are well organized. Secret societies have been collecting arms and ammunition for a long time and are preparing to enforce their claims at the point of a bayonet. If the Civil War be inaugurated here I am sure it will embarrass the government more than the Civil War in any state in the Union.
>
> Besides, the production and exportation of gold would cease at once. If the operation of the Mint were to cease, and we were to fail to pay depositors no one can tell how far such a misfortune were to go toward precipitating a collision. Probably 500 to 1,000 men, mostly miners, have deposits of bullion here. The failure to pay them would be seized upon by secessionists as a strong argument against government. These depositors are distributed through every part of the state, and their unfavorable influence would be great.
>
> I have been waited upon by scores of merchants and by every banker and assayer and refiner of bullion praying that under no circumstances should the Mint be allowed to stop operations. It would not be improper for me to remark that the bankers have formally waited upon me and offered to advance the full amount of wages due to men for six months rather than be subjected to the serious risks and circumstances and inconveniences which were to rise from a suspension of the regular business of the Mint
>
> As a public officer it is my duty to pursue such a course and my legitimate authority as may insure the credit of this department and the well being of the country, and these have been the influences which have controlled me in my action. I may here add that since working out [calculating] the payrolls which the Treasury refuses to pay and which were based upon reduction of 40% at 43% for currency, same [discount on paper money] has advanced to 48% at 50%. I do not pay telegraphic dispatches here because equivalent of gold is required, whereas if paid in Philadelphia currency will be received.
>
> I remain, sir, very respectfully, etc.
>
> R.B. Swain, superintendent.
>
> Will you be kind enough to represent these facts to the honorable secretary of the Treasury? [Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase was in Washington, D.C., were final decisions were made.]

After lengthy correspondence, delays, and hesitation at the Treasury Department in Washington, some adjustments were made to the salaries to reflect the currency depreciation that had taken place during the year. Bitterness continued, and as Clemens had reported in the *Call*, at least two valuable employees, poor men, had been forced to resign as they could not live on a salary paid at a rate of 40 on the dollar or, in their instance, not paid at all!

Diverse Precious Metal Sources

The *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint* for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1864, carried a commentary that the gold output of Idaho, the subject of a glowing report the year before, had continued to increase.[2] Further:

> Indian hostilities, and the troubled state of the country generally, have affected, to some extent, the operations in our gold producing localities. Still our mining regions are the scenes of activity and excitement, and enterprise and capital are fast taking possession of them.

The director also told of the silver in Nevada and gave the reason why the vast deposits from that territory had not resulted in an increase of domestic silver coinage:

> The history of the development of any mining region is a romance full of surprising incidents; and none is more so than that of Nevada Territory. From the first discovery of silver, in June 1859, to the present moment, that country has been a scene of excited search, toil and speculation, of rapid fortunes, severe losses and disappointments.
>
> In a time of peace, shall we have a share of the gold and silver of our own mines, for our currency and use, or must it be carried off to the plethoric vaults of European banks and capitalists? This latter is precisely the direction all the silver has taken thus far.
>
> None of the Nevada silver is coined here [at the Philadelphia Mint where the director prepared his report], and but little at San Francisco, where it first goes. Our correspondents at that port inform us that it is all shipped to England, partly

[1] Information from the National Archives via R.W. Julian. The telegram of September 26 duplicated some information from a telegram sent on September 21, but which seems to have been ignored. Swain reported to Pollock, who in turn reported to the Treasury Department in Washington (where final decisions were made). Mint employees and all other federal workers in San Francisco continued to be paid in federal Legal Tender paper money, which reduced the effective buying power of their wages to a significantly lower level than what most other workers earned in the private sector.

[2] The 1864 *Annual Report* as related to Idaho, Oregon, and Washington Territory is quoted in the present text in Chapter [illegible].

in rich ores that can more economically be smelted there, and partly in metallic bars.

The same *Mint Report* included these comments in reference to the former facilities of private coiners, Clark, Gruber & Co., which had been bought by the government in 1862. Despite official statements calling it a "branch mint," the "Denver Mint," etc., no coins were ever struck there. Years later in 1906 when the Denver Mint became a reality it was in a newly constructed building in a different part of the city and had new equipment:

> The Branch Mint at Denver, Colorado Territory, during the past year has been successfully engaged in melting, refining, assaying, and stamping gold bullion, returning the same to the depositor in the form unparted bars, bearing the government stamp of weight and fineness. The number of bars stamped was 532 amounting in value to $486,329.97.
>
> The efficiency and usefulness of this branch would be greatly increased if a safe and expeditious mode of transportation could be secured. An overland route of 600 miles is a formidable obstacle in the way of commercial intercourse with our eastern cities and markets. In addition, the hostility of the Indian tribes along the route, doubtless instigated by rebel [Confederate] emissaries and bad white men, has increased the difficulty and dangers of intercommunication and the transportation of bullion to the Atlantic markets. These difficulties will probably be obviated in due time, and that institution will then assume her proper position as a branch mint.

Beginning in a large way in 1864, steamers brought thousands of bags filled with high-grade silver ore into San Francisco from ports along the west coast of Mexico. No doubt, much of this was transshipped to England along with Nevada ore. For hundreds of years Mexico had been the world's single richest source of silver.

Bret Harte at the Mint

In 1864 Bret Harte, who was to become one of America's best-known nineteenth-century authors, was appointed secretary to the superintendent of the San Francisco Mint, whose office was situated in leased premises apart from the Mint. A biographical sketch of Harte follows and includes a role played by the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*:

> Harte, born [illegible] Harte in Albany, New York, on August 25, 18[illegible], came to San Francisco aboard the *Brother Jonathan* in 18[illegible], joining his mother who had arrived the year before. He tried several occupations including [illegible], clerking in a drug store, and working for an express company. Along the way he had the opportunity to see mining camps, and to [illegible] a year or two after he came to the coast.
>
> Writing had been an interest [illegible]. He had a poem printed in the New York [illegible] *Morning* [illegible]. During the 1850s he contributed articles to several publications including in San Francisco. From about 1857 to 1860 Harte worked in a town later known as Arcata, where he had gone with [illegible]. Among his jobs was [illegible] for the local paper, the *Northern Californian*. On February 2[illegible], 1860, a massacre of Indians took place on [illegible] Island near Arcata and [illegible] peaceful natives were murdered by a gang of white hoodlums. Upon learning of this, Harte wrote a piece favorable to the Indians, who were viewed as outcasts by many if not most white men who had taken over their territory, although few condoned their massacre. Quite possibly, Harte was no longer welcome in Arcata.
>
> Returning to San Francisco in 1860, he was hired as a typesetter for the *Golden Era*. His witty stories and anecdotes attracted attention, and in 1864 he participated in the founding of *The Californian*, a literary weekly, which eventually contained a series of articles later (1867) published in book form, "Condensed Novels." On August 11, 1862, he married Anna Griswold, who had come to California from New York. Although she is recorded (by Mark Twain) as being a fine lady, the marriage was not a love match, and Harte often ignored her and the couple's children.
>
> Harte became a friend of the charming and talented Jessie Benton Frémont, who beginning in 1861 provided him with entrees to several minor political appointments.[1] In 1864 he was named as the personal secretary to Superintendent Robert B. Swain of the San Francisco Mint, who had noticed his acumen as a writer. Swain's office and Harte's office were in the Call Building next door, there not being room for the superintendent's office and staff in the San Francisco Mint itself. In his position under Swain, Bret Harte had a steady income (even though it was paid in the detested Legal Tender notes) which permitted him to engage in writing on the side, including creating articles for and occasionally editing *The Californian*, at $20 per week. At the time of his Mint appointment he and his wife lived at 40 Silver Street.
>
> Remaining at the Mint for six years, Harte wrote prolifically, including "John Burns of Gettysburg," 'The Pliocene Skull," and "The Society Upon the Stanislaus." In July 1868 the *Overland Monthly* was launched with Harte as its editor and part owner. The second issue included his story, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," followed in January 1869 by "The Outcasts of Poker Flat." Fame was his, and he was recognized as one of America's most talented writers. However, in later years his spark became subdued, and despite a prolific output, none of his later works were as highly acclaimed as his Gold Rush era stories. In June 1878 he left his family behind and sailed to Europe, never returning to the United States. His wife came to join him in England in 1898, but the couple lived apart, even though she shared in his earnings. Harte died of cancer in England on May 5, 1902, and left a modest estate valued at only a few hundred pounds.

Mark Twain remembered Bret Harte:[2]

> In those ancient times the counting room of the *Morning Call* was on the ground floor; the office of the superintendent of the United States Mint was on the next floor above, with Bret Harte as private secretary of the superintendent. The quarters of the editorial staff and the reporters were on the third floor, and the composing room on the fourth and final floor. I spent a good deal of time with Bret Harte in his office after Smiggy McGlural came, but not before that. Harte was doing a good deal of writing for the *Californian–contributing* to "Condensed Novels" and sketches to it and also acting as editor, I think. I was a contributor. So was Charles H. Webb;

[1] Information about Harte's relationship with Fremont is found in Catherine Coffin Phillips, *Jessie Benton Fremont: A Woman Who Made History*, pp. 2[illegible] ff.

[2] *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, edited by Charles Neider, New York City, NY: Washington Square Press, 1961, pp. 134-137, 321. Twain's comments about Harte were written in 1906, four years after Harte's death.

also Prentiss Mulford; also a young lawyer named Hastings, who gave promise of distinguishing himself in literature some day. Charles Warren Stoddard was a contributor. Ambrose Bierce, who is still writing acceptably for the magazines today[1] and was then employed on some paper in San Francisco—*The Golden Era*, perhaps. We had very good times together—very social and pleasant times. But that was after Smiggy McGlural came to my assistance; there was no leisure before that. Smiggy was a great advantage to me—during thirty days. Then he turned into a disaster.

It was Mr. Swain, superintendent of the Mint, who discovered Bret Harte. Harte had arrived in California in the fifties, 23 or 24 years old, and had wandered up into the surface diggings of the camp at Yreka, a place which had acquired its curious name through an accident. There was a bakeshop with a canvas sign which had not yet been put up but had been painted and stretched to dry in such a way that the word BAKERY, all but the B, showed through and was reversed. A stranger read it wrong end first, YREKA, and supposed that that was the name of the camp. The campers were satisfied with it and adopted it.

Harte taught school in that camp several months. He also edited the weekly rag which was doing duty as a newspaper. He spent a little time also in the pocket-mining camp of Jackass Gulch (where I tarried, some years later, during three months). It was at Yreka and Jackass Gulch that Harte learned to accurately observe and put with photographic exactness on paper the woodland scenery of California and the general country aspects—the stagecoach, its driver and its passengers, and the clothing and general style of the surface miner, the gambler and their women; and it was also in these places that he learned, without the trouble of observing, all that he didn't know about mining, and how to make it read as if an expert were behind the pen. It was in those places that he also learned how to fascinate Europe and America with the quaint dialect of the miner—a dialect which no man in heaven or earth had ever used until Harte invented it. With Harte it died, but it was no loss. By and by he came to San Francisco. He was a compositor by trade and got work in *The Golden Era* office at ten dollars a week.

Harte was paid for setting, but he lightened his labors and entertained himself by contributing literature to the paper, uninvited. The editor and proprietor, Joe Lawrence, never saw Harte's manuscripts, because there weren't any. Harte spun his literature out of his head while at work at the case, and set it up as he spun. *The Golden Era* was ostensibly and ostentatiously a literary paper, but its literature was pretty feeble and sloppy and only exhibited the literary forms, without really being literature. Mr. Swain, the superintendent of the Mint, noticed a new note in that *Golden Era* orchestra—a new and fresh and spirited note that rose above that orchestras mumbling confusion and was recognizable as music. He asked Joe Lawrence who the performer was and Lawrence told him. It seemed to Mr. Swain a shame that Harte should be wasting himself in such a place and on such a pittance so he took him away, made him his private secretary on a good salary, with little or nothing to do, and told him to follow his own bent and develop his talent. Harte was willing and the development began.

Bret Harte was one of the pleasantest men I have ever known. He was also one of the unpleasantest men I have ever known. He was showy, meretricious, insincere; and he constantly advertised these qualities in his dress. He was distinctly pretty, in spite of the fact that his face was badly pitted with smallpox. In the days when he could afford it—and in the days when he couldn't—his clothes always exceeded the fashion by a shade or two. He was always conspicuously a little more intensely fashionable than the fashionablest of the rest of the community. He had good taste in clothes. With all his conspicuousness there was never anything really loud nor offensive about them. They always had a single smart little accent, effectively located, and that accent would have distinguished Harte from any other of the ultrafashionables. Oftenest it was his necktie. Always it was of a single color, and intense. Most frequently, perhaps, it was crimson—a flash of flame under his chin; or it was indigo blue and as hot and vivid as if one of those splendid and luminous Brazilian butterflies had lighted there. Harte's dainty self-complacencies extended to his carriage and gait. His carriage was graceful and easy, his gait was of the mincing sort but was the right gait for him, for an unaffected one would not have harmonized with the rest of the man and the clothes.

He hadn't a sincere fiber in him. I think he was incapable of emotion, for I think he had nothing to feel with. I think his heart was merely a pump and had no other function. I am almost moved to say I *know* it had no other function. I knew him intimately in the days when he was private secretary on the second floor and I a fading and perishing reporter on the third, with Smiggy McGlural looming doomfully in the near distance. I knew him intimately when he came east five years later in 1870 to take the editorship of the proposed *Lakeside Monthly* in Chicago.

In the early days I liked Bret Harte and so did the others, but by and by I got over it; so also did the others. He couldn't keep a friend permanently. He was bad, distinctly bad; he had no feeling he had no conscience. His wife was all that a good woman, a good wife, a good mother and a good friend can be; but when he went to Europe as consul he left her and his little children behind and never came back again from that time until his death twenty-six years later.

He was an incorrigible borrower of money; he borrowed from all his friends; if he ever repaid a loan the incident failed to pass into history. He was always ready to give his note but the matter ended there.

San Francisco Mint Coinage (1865)

History and Commentary

The year 1865 saw extensive activity at the San Francisco Mint, with many denominations produced from the half dime to the double eagle. As had been the case since the facility's inception, the large gold $20 remained the coin of choice for bankers, exporters, and anyone else who wanted to store or transport a large amount of money within or from California, where scarcely a paper note was in sight.

In the summer of the year at least several hundred freshly minted 1865-S double eagles were packed in wooden boxes and readied for shipment north along the coast via the sidewheel steamer *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. For several years the ship had been bringing gold dust, nuggets, and unparted bars from Portland, a depot for bullion produced to the

[1] 1906. Later, Ambrose Bierce disappeared, creating one of America's most publicized unsolved mysteries; his fate is still unknown today.

east in Oregon and the Owyhee district of Idaho, and gold from Victoria. On return visits, minted double eagles were brought to Portland, and from there they were shipped inland. Additional coins were destined for Victoria banks and merchants. United States gold and silver traded readily in the city.[1]

Unlike normal insured cargo such as commodities and machinery, it seems that many coins were taken aboard privately and not listed in either the manifest or in news announcements of "treasure." Thus, we may never know how many of these sparkling, brilliant 1865-S coins were carried, but we do know that if it had not been for the recovery from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, only a small handful of high quality 1865-S double eagles would be available to collectors.

As the curtain rang down on 1865, there were changes in the wind, and in the next year an audit-visit by John Jay Knox would verify that Mint conditions were cramped and unsatisfactory, leading the way eventually to the building of a new facility.

Our discussion of dates and denominations closes with the 12th year of activity of the first San Francisco Mint, the span being an era of experimentation, trials, and difficulties. Somehow, all those involved persevered, and many important and beautiful coins were produced. History would prove that coins of the 12 calendar years from 1854-1865 would include some of the most important rarities ever made in America. In choice Mint State, in sparkling "new" condition, just about the only specimens available of certain issues are the large gold denominations from the S.S. *Central America* (sunk in 1857 in the Atlantic) and the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* (sunk in 1865 in the Pacific). As fate would fortunately have it, the two events were sufficiently separated in time that there was virtually no overlapping among the coins found.

1865-S 5¢ Silver (Half Dime)

Mintage: 120,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Examples are [illegible], with F and VF being typical grades. Many are damaged. Breen (1988) states that over half all known survivors are [illegible].[2]

Rarity in Mint State: Many Mint State coins exist, mainly in lower levels such as MS-60 to MS-62, often cleaned, and [illegible] (MS-65) coins are very difficult to find.

Hoards: A small hoard including 10 to 20 Mint State 1865-S half dimes came to light in New York City in 1985. Today these have been widely dispersed and single pieces are seen.

Dies and die varieties: An overdate, "1865/4," has been described in the literature (i.e., Frossard's sale of the [illegible] Collection, 18[illegible], and New Netherlands Coin Company's sale of December 1963), but [illegible]. Walter Breen (1988) calls it a "numismatic ghost," a so-called overdate that "failed proper inspection."

1865-S 10¢ Silver (Dime)

Mintage: 175,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1865-S follows the track of the dimes of the 1861-1863 years, for despite a generous mintage, few survive. Where did they go? Probably to China.

Rarity in Mint State: In full Mint State, especially if choice, the 1865-S dime is a notable rarity, one of the most elusive of all San Francisco dimes in the entire Liberty Seated series.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Four obverse dies for the 1865 coinage were shipped from Philadelphia in November 1865. Brian Greer in his book on the subject noted that four die varieties are known today, indicating full utilization.

Notes: This issue often is found lightly struck due to the dies having been spaced too widely apart.

1865-S 25¢ Silver (Quarter Dollar)

Mintage: 41,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1865-S quarter dollar is very scarce. When seen, examples are apt to be in low grades such as G, VG, and Fine.

Rarity in Mint State: This issue is a classic rarity in Mint State, with perhaps 15 to 25 known.

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Five obverse dies were shipped on November 1864 for the 1865 coinage. However, only one die variety is known today, this having thin numerals on the obverse and a large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark on the reverse.

1865-S 50¢ Silver (Half Dollar)

Mintage: 675,000.

Rarity in circulated grades: Examples in all grades are quite scarce, more so than expected from the fairly generous mintage. The vast majority of known coins are in worn grades, VG to Fine being about typical.

Rarity in Mint State: In true Mint State the 1865-S is very rare, with only about five to 10 estimated to exist, including only a few gems.

Hoards: Some heavily cleaned EF pieces are from the so-called Guatemala Hoard No. 1 (see 1860-S above).

Dies and die varieties: 12 obverse dies were sent from the Philadelphia Mint, of which seven were used, in combination with at least eight leftover reverse dies. • Small broad S, mintmark broken at top. • Small narrow S, a bit more plentiful than the preceding.

Silver bars: $145,236 value.

1865-S $2.50 Gold (Quarter Eagle)

Mintage: 23,376.

[1] Vancouver, British Columbia, adopted a decimal coinage system in 1861, and mainland British Columbia adopted the same system in 1865; however, no circulating coins were struck in that district (although in 1862 pattern $10 and $20 gold coins from dies by Albrecht Kuner were made). Large amounts of United States coins were used in commerce. Silver was in oversupply and often traded at a discount in terms of gold.

[2] *Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U.S. and Colonial Coins*, 1988, p. 294.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1865-S quarter eagle is hardly common, but enough exist that an example is usually obtainable with only a moderate amount of searching. Fine and VF seem to be about par for the grades seen, with EF and AU coins being in the distinct minority.

Rarity in Mint State: Perhaps four to six exist, projecting it deep into the rarity class. In practice, few collectors have ever had a chance to buy one, and even the most advanced cabinets are likely to have had an AU at best (*e.g.*, Virgil Brand and Louis Eliasberg collections).

Hoards: None.

Dies and die varieties: Three 1865-dated obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1864, and at least two of these were used (one showing repunching). • The only reverse die seen is identical with that used for 1863-S.

1865-S $5 Gold (Half Eagle)

Mintage: 27,612.

Rarity in circulated grades: The 1865-S half eagle is fairly scarce in all grades. Walter Breen (1988) commented: "Prohibitively rare above VF, unknown above EF." Despite this, a couple dozen AU pieces have come on the market in recent years, an anomalous situation possibly representing an unchronicled discovery or small hoard. Still, examples remain elusive.

Rarity in Mint State: Perhaps two or three specimens were known prior to the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* recovery, which added two more.

Hoards: None reported.

Dies and die varieties: Three 1865-dated obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1864. • Varieties with large and medium S mintmarks, the latter scarce.

1865-S $10 Gold (Eagle)

Lustrous 1865-S $10 gold eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. This variety has the error date, 1865 over inverted 186.

Mintage: 16,700.

Rarity in circulated grades (perfect date): The 1865-S eagle is very scarce in all grades. Most are VF, with an occasional EF and, less often, an AU appearing on the market.

Rarity in Mint State (perfect date): None known.

Hoards (perfect date): None.

Dies and die varieties: Six 1865-dated obverses were shipped to San Francisco in November 1864. • Obverse varieties are known with perfect date (slightly scarcer) and 1865-S over inverted 186 (see below). • Large S (1.7 mm.) mintmark.

1865-S over inverted 186 variety: The three-digit date logotype was first punched upside down, the error was realized, and the date overpunched in the correct position. The inverted 186 digits are still clear. This variety was discovered by Walter Breen and John J. Ford, Jr., in spring 1960, while reviewing an auction consignment from a friend of Mrs. Emery May Holden Norweb. The variety was first published in December 1960 in New Netherlands' catalogue of that date. The 1865-S over inverted 186 is popular as the most dramatic die blunder in the entire Liberty Head $10 gold series and easily the most curious die variety of any denomination from the San Francisco Mint for the era under study (1854-1865).

Rarity in circulated grades: Very scarce, but slightly more available than the perfect date. When seen, specimens are apt to be VF or EF, although two or three AU pieces have been reported.

Rarity in Mint State: Only one is known, a brilliant, lustrous specimen recovered from the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

Hoards: None.

1865-S $20 Gold (Double Eagle)

1865-S $20 gold double eagle recovered from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

Mintage: 1,042,500.

Rarity in circulated grades: In past years, the 1865-S double eagle has been readily available in VF and EF grades, and very scarce in AU. Even the greatest specialized collections have typically included a worn specimen.

Rarity in Mint State: The historical record shows very few auction appearances of specimens in years past. In fact, *only three* were found by David W. Akers in his 1982 study of several hundred auction sales. Similarly, through 1998 only a few Mint State pieces were certified, these mostly in lower levels. In choice or gem Mint State, the 1865-S was, in effect, an "impossible" rarity.

Today, thanks to the efforts of Deep Sea Research, Inc., several hundred Mint State specimens are known to exist, all recovered from the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*. The grades vary, but many are in the numismatically elite grades of MS-63, MS-64, or MS-65, and a few are even finer.

Hoards: Walter Breen reported (1988) that "Uncirculated are from a tiny hoard discovered about 1967." Whatever this group might have contained, the number of pieces must have been very few.

As is related in detail in Appendix B of the present book, hundreds of Mint State 1865-S $20 coins were recovered from the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*. Coins of this date, denomination, and mintmark dominated the ship's treasure. In addition to the Mint State coins, a few pieces grade AU. Some of the Mint State coins were arranged in columns or stacks of pieces indicating that they were probably packed for shipment in rows in wooden boxes, fresh from the San Francisco Mint. In the future the 1865-S will be recognized as available in Mint State, probably one of just a few double eagle dates of the 1850-1865

design type (without motto IN GOD WE TRUST) that are available in choice, lustrous preservation.

Dies and die varieties: Six 1865-dated obverse dies were shipped to San Francisco in November 1864, followed by eight more in May 1865. Eight reverses were also sent. • Small S mintmark.

$500.00 gold ingot from the San Francisco Mint, 1865. This ingot is a remarkably high 998 fine (nearly pure gold). Weight: 24.24 ounces. Serial 2180. (Henry Clifford Collection)

Gold bars: None listed in the Mint Report: However, refined bars bearing the imprint of the San Francisco Mint, the weight, and the value were made available on request to depositors of gold.[1]

Mints Use California Gold

1865: Total California gold metal production: $17,930,858; of this figure, the amount used for coinage was as follows:

San Francisco Mint use of California gold: $11,089,975 (*plus* $217,936 in gold parted from deposits of *silver*, the latter including out-of-state origin).

Philadelphia Mint use of California gold: $64,308.

New York City Assay Office use of California gold: $2,177,954.

Other Gold to San Francisco

1865: Sources of gold used at the San Francisco Mint *other than California gold:*

Nevada gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $5,400.

Oregon gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $1,103,077. Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*.

Washington Territory gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $22,290.64. Some of this metal may have been shipped from Portland to San Francisco on the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*.

Idaho Territory gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $3,499,281. Much of this metal was brought from Portland to San Francisco on the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*.

Arizona gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $20,369.

Montana gold used at the San Francisco Mint: $3,000.

Refined gold from various outside sources used at the San Francisco Mint: $2,598,033.

Paper Money Depreciation

1865: Amount in federal Legal Tender notes that could be purchased with $100 in gold:

Low for year through June: $128.50 (May).

High for year through June: $234.50 (January).

Confederate paper: In January 1865, $100 face value in Confederate notes was worth about $1.70 in federal silver or copper coins.

An Inside View of the Mint

Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, compiled in 1865, included this information about the San Francisco Mint. The roster of employees represents the majority of the staff who had coined the 1865-S $20 pieces (and many other issues) carried aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on her voyage out of the city on July 28, 1865, and thus is especially significant in the present study:

> **Regulations:** The law for the establishment and regulation of the United States Mint, and the branches thereof, provides that any person may deposit with the officers in charge of the same, gold and silver in bullion, grain, or lumps, which, if requested, shall be refined, assayed, and cast into bars or coined, as speedily as possible after the receipt thereof, the bars to be stamped in said mint or branches, in such manner as shall indicate the weight, fineness, and value of the same; the expense incurred to be retained from each deposit so made, at such rates and charges, and under such regulations, as may from time to time be established. The said charges not to exceed the actual cost of refining, casting, and forming said bars, including labor, wastage, use of machinery, material, etc., or of 1% for coinage, to be received by the treasurer of the Mint at which the deposit was made, and by him accounted for to the treasurer of the United States.
>
> **Hours open to the public:** Office hours are from 9 o'clock a.m. to 2 p.m. Gold bullion received daily from 9 o'clock a.m. to 12 m. [noon]; Silver bullion from 12 m. to 1 p.m. Visitors admitted daily from 9 o'clock a.m. to 12 m.
>
> **Superintendent:** Robert B. Swain.
>
> **Treasurer's Department:** D.W. Cheesman, treasurer. William Macy, cashier; J.B. Scotchler, bookkeeper; John H. Beardsley, abstract clerk; Joseph P. Cochran, weight clerk; J.N. Souther, receipt clerk; William M. Noyes, superintendentÆs clerk; Robert T. Polk, Internal Revenue clerk; James H. Cills, computing clerk; Mrs. Elizabeth Wyer, memorandum clerk; George W. Torr, watchman.
>
> **General Department:** Frank Bret Harte, secretary; Oliver P. Allen, general clerk; M. Gallagher, warehouseman; Charles Wood, millwright; Samuel Thompson, conductor; William Satterlee and Andrew Kurtz, doorkeepers; S.D. Cunningham, N. Haskell, E.H. Morton, Jacob Odell, and Cornelius Schenck, watchmen; Henry F. Sampson, janitor.

[1] Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 1865, p. 347, quoted fully below

Assaying Department: B.T. Martin, assayer; H.H. Lawrence, deputy assayer; George Parry, treasurer's clerk; William H. Martin, registrar; John Evans, sampler; T.R. Butler, George H. Fillmore, Wirt Hopkins, Alexander H. Martin, and William T. Riley, beam men [weighers]; W.P. Prescott, foreman of the laboratory; Oliver Hawes and R.T. Roberts, cupellers; Frank Kennedy and James Ogelsby, boilers; Patrick Durkin, helper; William Windsor, laborer.

Melters and Refiners Department: John M. Eckfeldt, melter and refiner; Charles S. Cousins, assistant melter and refiner; W.K. Benjamin, treasurer's clerk; Timothy H. Rearden and A.B. Falkenbergh, clerks; John Feix, Samson Lion, Jacob Stadtfeld, and J.M. Gardner, melters; Frederick M. Benner, C.W. Cornor, Geo. Curtis, Charles Gibbs, Wm. Edmonds, John Turner, and Joseph Wilson, helpers; Archibald Cooper, foreman of the refinery; James S. Blaikie, Henry Cromer, W.S. Eaton, E.E. Elliott, R.P. Franklin, J.S. Ottignon, Joseph A. Smith, W.J. Somers, James S. Handlin, and Peter Witbeck, refiners.

Coiner's Department: William Schmolz, coiner; Adolphus Schmolz, assistant coiner; John A. Collison, chief adjuster; Granville Hosmer, assistant adjuster; Mrs. A.W. Bunnell, Mrs. Mary Comstock, Miss M.M. Eschenburg, Miss Maria Fernald, Miss C.L. Frost, Mrs. Anna Heydenfeldt, Miss H.S. Lovekin, Mrs. Abby L. Marble, Miss J.A. McLean, Miss Charlotte Pilkington, Mrs. E.B. Rankin, Miss Laura F. Shew, Miss Jane Steadman, Mrs. M.J. Stout, and Miss Isabella Gallagher, adjusters; Warren C. Butler, foreman of the cutting room; B.H. Campbell, A.P. Stanton, and James J. Veatch, cutters; E.C. Bowen, foreman of the coining room; W.M. Boyd, assistant foreman; D.W. Davies, James C. Harvey, and S.B. Mowry, rollers; Thomas Higgins, C.W. Kittredge, and Thomas Walton, annealers; Matthew Smith, trap-tender; J.B. Harmstead, machinist; Lewis Henry, chief engineer; Peter Mott, assistant engineer; Silas S. Burt, foreman.

Richardson Visits the Mint

Albert D. Richardson, Samuel Bowles (see below), and others visited San Francisco in the summer of 1865, earlier traveling in the Pacific Northwest with Schuyler Colfax, speaker of the House of Representatives, who, literally, was the guest of the West.[1] Subsequently, Richardson told of his tour of the Mint:[2]

> The United States Mint is one of the most interesting features of San Francisco. The crude metal, received in bars, is melted and mingled, two parts of silver with one of gold; then poured into water, where it cools in fragments like suddenly-cooled lead or popped corn. It is thus broken into fine pieces, that acids may work upon it more readily—as fire kindles shavings and chips more easily than solid sticks of wood. The nitric acid turns the silver, copper, and lead into liquid; but leaves the gold a dirty brown powder. We saw a rough pile of this, looking as valueless as brick-dust; but worth $300,000. Next, the gold has the water squeezed out by an immense weight; it is [melted and] molded into bars; and rolled into long, thin, narrow strips. From these the round coins are cut, then milled, stamped on both sides, and corrugated—all by machinery. Metallic fingers seize each piece and place it under the stamps, where it is subjected to a pressure of 160 tons.
>
> Another machine *counts* the coins, picking out five dollars worth of coppers in one minute, with perfect exactness. Here are scales, too, which will weigh *one four-thousandth of a gram.*
>
> Our coins of precious metal contain nine parts of gold and silver to one of copper. Common salt and zinc are used in hardening the liquid silver and separating it from lead and copper. At night, the employees all leave their working clothing in the mint. When these garments are worn out, they are burned, and the ashes washed, to save the gold. The water in which the workmen wash their hands is also carefully drained off for the same purpose. Through these two sources about $15,000 per annum is saved. Practically, there is no loss. In 1864, upon a coinage of $21,000,000, the deficit was only $2,000, though at the rates allowed by the government for wastage it would have reached $70,000.
>
> For the excitement of strangers, the workmen pour a glowing, red-hot stream of melted gold into their hands for a moment, and then empty it out, without receiving a burn. The perspiration protects them, as plumbers thrust their fingers, wet with cold water, into liquid lead, and smelters, into molten iron.

Bowles Visits the Mint

Samuel Bowles, Massachusetts newspaper editor and writer, also visited San Francisco in the summer of 1865 and penned this commentary:[4]

> Of all the government institutions in San Francisco, the Mint is the most interesting and important. Already it is the greatest manufactory of coin in the nation, and its comparative importance in this respect is destined to increase. It coins now about $20,000,000 in gold and silver a year, against

[1] Born in New York City on March 23, 1823, Schuyler Colfax pursued his career in Indiana, where he served in various elective offices, advocated the temperance movement, and was editor of the South Bend *Free Press* (later purchasing it with A.W. West and changing the name to the *St. Joseph Valley Register*). In 1848 he attended the Whig nominating convention in Baltimore which picked Zachary Taylor as its presidential candidate. In 1854, following an unsuccessful attempt in 1851, he was elected to Congress, where he served successive terms until 1869. On December 7, 1863, he was elected speaker of the House of Representatives. Following his trip to the Pacific Coast in 1865 he prepared a lecture, "Across the Continent," which he delivered with success many times. In May 1868 he was nominated as vice president on the winning Republican ticket that included U.S. Grant as president. He unsuccessfully sought the vice presidential nomination in 1872, was denied it, but soon was offered, but declined the editor's chair on the *New York Tribune*. In 1873 he was deeply implicated in the Credit Mobilier scandal in which members of Congress were given large amounts of free stock by private financial interests. Although he [illegible] denied the charges, and it was generally acknowledged that if the offense had been committed it was before he had become vice president, his political career came to a standstill. Colfax continued on the lecture circuit, with one of his most popular titles being "Lincoln and Garfield." He died [illegible] on January 13, 1885.

[2] *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, p. 459.

[3] Perhaps the machine could count 500 coins in one minute, but there were no *copper* coins struck at the San Francisco Mint [illegible]

[4] *Across the Continent*, 1865, pp. 345-347. [illegible] p. 327 noted: "The mail companies had [illegible] Colfax special coaches for crossing the continent [illegible] studying the vast and varied interests of the West [illegible] invited as companions Messrs. William Bross [owner] of the *Chicago Tribune* and lieutenant governor of Illinois, Samuel Bowles of the *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican*, [and others]. We met at Atchison, Kansas, then the western terminus of the railroad [and] from that point went to Denver, etc.[...]"

$5,000,000 coined at all the other government mints in the country including the parent mint at Philadelphia.[1]

The coinage here for June and July [1865] was nearly $3,000,000 a month, and the aggregate for this year is likely to go up to $24,000,000. Mints elsewhere on the Pacific Coast, and in the mining regions, are utterly unnecessary. There is one at Denver in Colorado, but it has nothing to do—the gold of the Colorado and Montana mines goes right by it, in dust or bars, to New York and Philadelphia. Efforts are making to get mints in Nevada and in Oregon, but they would only prove a waste of money.[2] No local clamor of politicians, or contractors' jobs for friends, should induce Congress to yield to such demands. Two mints are only needed for the whole country, at New York or Philadelphia, and at San Francisco. The metals, as soon as mined, drift at once to the commercial and financial centers; there only can their true value be known—there only the use to which commerce may choose to put them. Sometimes, she demands their exportation in bars, and again in coin.

Besides, the business of coining is an intricate and delicate one, requiring large responsibilities, expensive establishments, and men of both science and integrity. It should not be needlessly cheapened and scattered. The government may well have assay offices in all the mining districts, acting as branches of the mints, to receive the metals and give coin or exchange for their full value, minus the bare cost of manipulating, in order to accommodate especially the poorer and smaller miners; but the multiplication of mints, I repeat, is an unnecessary, wasteful, and dangerous operation.

The Mint here is in charge of one of the best merchants of the city, Mr. R.B. Swain; but it has no adequate accommodations. It is crowded into the back and upper rooms of an old and ordinary block in the principal business street. But provision has been made by Congress for a distinct and appropriate building.

The metals are received at the Mint in all manner of half worked forms, in dust, ingots, rough bars, silver and gold mixed together, and more or less dross with all. Each parcel is kept distinct, first assayed to discover its exact value, and then melted over, the dross expelled, and the silver and gold separated. Fire, water, and chemicals are the means employed. The processes are simple enough and [illegible] entertaining as one follows them with eye and [illegible] explanations given by an employee. The results are returned to the owner either in fine bars [illegible] or in freshly made coin.

Much gold and silver are already exported direct from here to China [illegible]. The balances of trade of both New York and London [illegible] and when the Pacific Railroad is done, and the line of steamships to China is running, San Francisco [illegible] the center of the gold and silver producing region of the world, and the balance house of commerce, will become the great financial and balancing center for all the trade between Europe and America and Asia.

A Serious Problem

An account related that on February 10, 1865,

> Walter F. Denio, melter and refiner of the U.S. Branch Mint, age [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible], and operations at the Mint are necessarily suspended until advices are received from Washington.

A. P. MOLITOR,
ASSAYER,
611 Commercial St., opposite U.S. Branch Mint, San Francisco.
RETURNS MADE IN BARS OR COIN IN SIX HOURS.
Charges for Assaying and Smelting:
On Gold Dust, 1-4 of one per cent, ... On Gold Bars, 1-8 " " ... On Silver, 1 per cent, ... } Minimum Charge, $3.00.
Mineral Assays, from $5 to $10.

In 1865, assayer A.P. Molitor, earlier associated with the private minting firm of Wass, Molitor & Co., was set up in business across the street from the San Francisco Mint. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

This was a tragic result of the overcrowded, stuffy, and unhealthful conditions at the Mint.

The San Francisco Mint in Later Years

The *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint* for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1866, included this plea by Director James Pollock, no doubt influenced at least in part by the Denio death:

> I cannot too earnestly urge upon the government the importance of erecting a new Mint building at San Francisco. The present building is not only wholly unfitted for the large and increasing business of that Branch Mint, but unsafe, and unworthy of the great mineral wealth of the Pacific States. The appropriation made by Congress should be applied at once to the erection of a building which in architecture, size, capacity, machinery, and every useful modern appliance should be equal to the present and future of California. The management of this Branch during the past year has been efficient, and its operations, under the direction of the superintendent, well and carefully performed.

Knox at the Mint

The same 1866 report included a long evaluation of the San Francisco Mint, dated November 27, 1866, by John Jay Knox, who had been sent to the facility to study, investigate, and evaluate its processes.[4] Several excerpts are given here:

[1] Actually, in 1865 there was only *one* other operating mint, that at Philadelphia. The Charlotte, Dahlonega, and New Orleans branch mints had closed in 1865, the first two never to be reopened for coinage purposes; the New Orleans Mint would again produce coins years later—beginning in 1879.

[2] In actuality, Congress had already authorized a mint in Carson City, Nevada (legislation passed in 1863) and in The Dalles, Oregon (passed in 1864).

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, pp. 21-22.

[4] Knox, who worked at the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C., had been sent to the West Coast to evaluate monetary situations there. Later, in 1870, he traveled widely to the various mints (including Carson City, which opened for business that year) and to the New York Assay Office and evaluated their processes, uncovering many irregularities and inefficiencies. Knox was an ardent numismatist and on October 23, 1871, was a major buyer of rare coins at the sale of the collection of J. Ledyard Hodge. Knox was also deeply involved in research and investigations which led to the production of a new denomination, the trade dollar, in 1873. In 1885 his book, *United States Notes*, was published.

Business Operations of the Mint

The business operations of the San Francisco Mint may be concisely stated as follows:

Certificates are given to depositors of gold dust or bullion by the treasurer of the Mint, stating the gross weight of such deposit. These deposits are then passed to the melter's room, and after melting are returned to the treasurer and the weight of each deposit separately again entered upon the books. Chips are then taken from the opposite corners of these bars by the assayer, and from data furnished by him the value is ascertained by two different clerks, one representing the superintendent and one the treasurer.

The transaction is then closed with the depositor by his payment, out of the bullion fund, upon presentation of his certificate and the warrant of the superintendent. A memorandum is then given to the depositor, exhibiting the whole transaction in detail, beginning with the weight before melting, and closing with the net value and the amount by the treasurer. These bars are legally in the custody of the treasurer until the depositor is paid.

They then pass into the custody of the melter and refiner, who, after toughening, parting, and refining, mix the proper alloy and transfer the ingots, through the treasurer, to the coiner, proper entries being made upon the books of each of these officers.

The coiner then goes through his different processes, and the coin is delivered to the treasurer, in the presence of the assayer, who tests the standard weight of the coin and reserves the assay pieces for the pyx, or annual trial at the Mint in Philadelphia.[1] The amounts previously paid to the depositor are then replaced in the bullion fund.

The report continued and noted that an investigation uncovered a major theft by the cashier of the Mint, who was believed to have stolen about $20,000. "On the 15th of December [1865] the defaulting cashier absconded, as is supposed, on the Nicaragua steamer."[2]

On another subject, Knox stated that the payment of San Francisco Mint employees in the detested, devalued Legal Tender notes caused many problems:

Through the hands of the receiving clerks and the cashier in the treasurer's office pass all the bullion receipts and payments of the Mint, and upon the calculations of the computing clerks depend the accuracy of all the warrants paid out of the bullion fund. Their salaries are $2,000, and I certainly consider it wrong to place men in such positions of trust with a salary that will not pay their current economical expenses. The actual compensation of these men during the rebellion, reduced to the gold standard, did not average a salary of $1,200 currency in the city of Washington, which is not one-half the amount paid for corresponding services in other like positions in the city of San Francisco. The treasurer informs me that the bookkeeper, by consent of this department, is permitted to attend to other duties for a portion of the day outside of the office. He is now a secretary of an insurance company, for which services he receives a much larger salary than that paid by the Mint.[3] It is not probable that a competent man can be found to devote all his time to this position upon the present salary.

Various other employees were discussed by Knox:

The coiner has some 35 employees under him engaged in the cutting, rolling, annealing, adjusting, and stamping processes of this department. Fifteen of these employees are ladies employed in filing or adjusting the unstamped coin, and who receive $110 per month. It is probable that a lesser number, say 10, could usually do all the work, though at times when deposits are large the full force is required.

The coiner and the assistant coiner are brothers, and both are considered competent men. The coiner is engaged in the business of a scale manufacturer outside of the Mint.[4] It would be better not to continue two brothers in positions so closely connected, and I recommend that the coiner be asked to resign, and some other employee in the Mint be promoted by the superintendent to that position.

The assayer is a clergyman. He was for many years employed in the Philadelphia Mint, and is a scientific man, considered particularly well skilled and well fitted for the duties of his position. He has some 15 persons occupied in performing the delicate duties performed in his office.

The melter and refiner belongs to a family [Eckfeldt] which has been connected with the Mint of the United States almost from its foundation. He is a most intelligent gentleman upon questions relative to the manipulation of metals and the general business of the mint, and has 25 employees in his office who perform their duties certainly as well as they can be performed in the miserable rooms in which they are confined, wanting both in ventilation and light, and obliged continually to jostle each other and the numerous visitors of the Mint in the performance of their duties.

The assistants to the coiner, assayer, and melter and refiner are now receiving $9.75 per day, or more than their principals. The machinist and melters receive $8.25 per day; other employees $6.50; and the watchmen and laborers $5.50. These prices *when reduced to coin* are not more, I find upon inquiry, than is customary to pay for like services in the city. The currency [Legal Tender paper money notes] now paid for wages of workmen is always reduced to the gold standard. The salaries are the lowest paid in California, and the most valuable men in the Mint would have resigned long since were they not engaged in other occupations outside of office hours. It would be much better to pay all the salaries in gold.

The unsatisfactory condition of the San Francisco Mint building was discussed further:

The business of the branch mint is now conducted in a small building upon Commercial Street, just 60 feet square. It is almost impossible to conceive how so much work can be well done, and so much business transacted safely, in so small a space. The melting of the bullion of the depositors and the reduction of ingots to standard fineness for coinage, are now done in a small room not large enough for either process.

The entrance to the business office is up a steep pair of stairs and through a dark hall rendered unwholesome by the fumes of acids, and uncomfortable by the noise of machinery.

[1] Conducted by the Assay Commission (consisting of Mint and government officials and appointed individuals from the private sector).
[2] This would have been on the S.S. *America*.
[3] J.B. Scotchler, secretary of the Merchants' Mutual Marine Insurance Co.
[4] William Schmolz, who operated a large business at 530 Montgomery Street and placed full page advertisements in Langley's *San Francisco Directory*.

> and the heat of the engine. The apartments of the different officers and the desks of the clerks are cramped and inconvenient, and the vaults depend for their safety chiefly upon the presence of well-tried watchmen.
>
> Rents [for premises outside of the Mint] for the office of the assistant treasurer, and for the superintendent, for storage, and for gas, are now paid, amounting to nearly $12,000 annually, which will be saved upon the erection of a suitable building. Temporary repairs and improvements were being made in October [1865, the time of an earthquake], which were absolutely needed, at an expense of $1,500. I obtained also at the Custom House a good lock, which had been sent out from this department [Treasury Department in Washington, D.C.], and which was placed upon the vault in the treasurer's office, where it was urgently needed.
>
> I hope to be able to congratulate the department, as one of the results of my visit to California, upon the purchase of a suitable site upon which should be speedily erected a Mint building creditable to the government.

Knox went on to say that the San Francisco Mint "does not furnish gold bars to depositors, as it might do profitably." Although the Mint had produced bars for sale as recently as 1865, apparently most if not all of that business was conducted by private assayers in the city in 1866. He noted that many holders of gold preferred to use bars, thus avoiding charges and delays at the Mint, although for bars of lower fineness deposited at the Mint, the silver extracted during the refining process was sometimes valuable enough to offset the Mint charges to the depositor. Most privately refined gold bars on the market in San Francisco were from 800 to 830 fine under normal circumstances.

If a suitable building could be made available for the San Francisco Mint, a large business could be gained in the refining of silver and resultant silver coinage. Knox learned from two gentlemen who managed a private silver refinery, with capital of $5,000,000, that the private firm could refine silver and gold "at about one half the rate now charged by the Mint."

During the course of his stay in California, Knox visited outlying sources of gold in the Sierras and concluded that private assayers were doing a good job:

> My visit to California and the mining regions in the Sierra Nevadas has entirely changed my opinion relative to the propriety of erecting United States Assay Offices in the remote mining regions. In every mineral district producing [at least] $3 million there will be at least three private assay offices, owned by reliable men, the amount of whose business will depend upon the honesty and ability with which it is conducted. Almost every large quartz mill contains an assayer, and the [illegible] of these assayers is well known at the Mint, where [illegible].
>
> Private assayers will conduct their business much more economically than government officers, and the large quartz mills will in most cases do their own assaying, even if government offices are located in the same towns. Assayers of well established reputations will obtain from large mining corporations compensation for their services, in most cases, nearly or quite double the salaries paid by the United States, or they will earn much more in a private capacity than they will receive if in the employ of the government. The result will be, therefore, that the United States will obtain and retain only indifferent assayers and workmen, or those in its employ will endeavor to increase their pay illegitimately, thus subjecting the United States assay officers to the same charges of injustice and fraud with which private individuals are sometimes accused.
>
> If, however, it is the policy of the government to erect assay offices at such remote points, it should also prohibit private assaying in such districts, and control and direct the whole business.[1]

The Second San Francisco Mint, used from 1874 until the late 1930s. In time this facility became known as the "Granite Lady." (From unsigned "American Scenery, California" stereograph card series, late 19th century)

The New Mint

In 1870 the cornerstone was laid for a new San Francisco Mint building, a structure that would be occupied from 1874 until the present Duboce Street facility was constructed in 1937. Later known as the "Granite Lady," the 1870 building still stands at 5th and Mint streets, near Mission Street. Numismatic tradition has it that certain coins are believed to have been struck for inclusion in the cornerstone, including an 1870-S $3 gold piece and possibly an 1870-S silver dollar.[2]

[1] A telling statement. Obviously, if the government could not operate as efficiently as the private sector, or its employees as honestly, the government, in order to have a worthwhile assay business, would simply eliminate all its competition!

[2] In Thomas L. Elder's March 1911 sale of the William H. Woodin collection (which included an 1870-S $3), a paper from Coiner J.B. Harmstead was included, which identified the $3 as a duplicate of one in the cornerstone, nothing was said about a silver dollar.

It seems that the San Francisco Mint was destined to have ships and shipwrecks as part of its history. Years later, this item was included in *The Numismatist:*[1]

> Two 29 x 4-foot Doric columns and five sandstone blocks intended to grace the Greek Revival portico of the San Francisco Mint were recovered from an underwater site off the coast of British Columbia, Canada. The columns and blocks were part of the cargo of the *Zephyr,* a three-masted bark that set sail from Newcastle Island off the coast of British Columbia in the winter of 1872. Construction of the Mint had begun in 1864 [*sic*], and San Francisco architects assigned to the project awaited the ship's arrival—but the *Zephyr* never reached its destination. A blinding snowstorm during the early morning hours of February 13, 1872, forced the *Zephyr* too close to the rocky shore of Mayne Island, off the east coast of Vancouver Island. After the rocks tore a hole in its side, the ship sank rapidly, taking the lives of the captain and another crew member. The ship's fate was reported later that week in the *San Francisco Chronicle.* The wreckage was discovered more than 100 years later by members of the Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia.

In April 1906, the building was the only one in its immediate area to survive the earthquake and fire. With its own water supply and employees on hand to help hose down the roof, the Mint was scorched, but not measurably harmed.

Summary

Here concludes the story of the San Francisco Mint during the early years 1854-1865. By the latter year the federal coinage facility had been established for over a decade, private coiners had long since disappeared from the local scene, and millions of coins had been struck.

The $20 gold double eagle was the first and foremost coined epitomization of the California Gold Rush, and by 1865 this large, heavy, and impressive denomination was known worldwide. In the same year the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* would inadvertently add a chapter to the chronicle of the San Francisco Mint and its coinage.

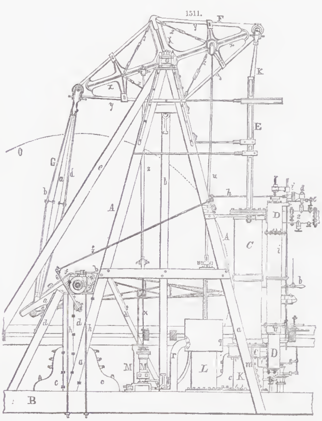
[1] January 1988 issue.

Chapter Seven

The Brother Jonathan *in the Atlantic*

The *Brother Jonathan*

During the heady days of the 1850s, continuing into the more leisurely pace of the 1860s, the sidewheel steamer *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was one of dozens of large passenger and cargo vessels engaged in the Pacific Coast trade. In her early career in and out of San Francisco, she brought thousands of eager-faced gold seekers to the city, and on outbound voyages carried cargoes of "treasure" amounting in the aggregate to millions of dollars. The Gold Rush was on, and the *Brother Jonathan* was one of its most familiar components.



Walking beam steam engine in a typical marine installation. Such an engine was mounted with the base of the frame ("B") attached firmly to keelsons on each side. Here the main steam cylinder ("C") is on the right and the shaft driving the paddlewheels is on the left. (*Appleton's Dictionary of Machines, Mechanics, Engine-Work, and Engineering*, 1850)

Later years were spent servicing two new gold rushes, carrying passengers and cargo north to the discoveries in British Columbia in the late 1850s and in Oregon and Idaho in the early 1860s. Again, she carried precious golden cargo. By 1865, her last year of life, the *Brother Jonathan* was an indelible part of San Francisco lore and legend.

Description of the Sidewheel Steamer

The *Brother Jonathan* was launched at the well-known and very busy shipyard of Perrine, Patterson & Stack, Williamsburgh, New York,[1] in 1850. The 1,360 ton[2] sidewheel steamer was made of locust, white oak, live oak, and cedar and cost about $190,000. Her measurements were 220 feet 11 inches long by 36 feet wide with a draft of 13 feet 10 inches when carrying normal load. Long diagonal braces of flat iron bar 4½ inches wide by ½ inch thick were spaced at intervals of five feet and served to additionally brace the ship from stem to stern.

Power was provided by coal-fired boilers connected to a low-pressure vertical steam engine renovated and installed by the Morgan Iron Works. The large cylinder of the engine measured six feet in diameter, operated with an

[1] In 1855 Williamsburgh became a part of Brooklyn, NY; Brooklyn later became a borough of New York City.

[2] Concerning the weight or displacement of the ship, William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1807-1868*, states 1,359 tons, which was her weight at launching in 1850. Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, 1953, pp. 63-64, gives an excellent account of the *Brother Jonathan*; the weight he lists, 1,181 tons, is that after the ship was rebuilt in 1861. The subsequently quoted story in the *Alta California* gives slightly different specifications. Such discrepancies are typical of such accounts, as often news reports gave only approximate dimensions, and displacement was often a matter of opinion rather than fact.

11-foot stroke, and drove a pair of 33-foot paddlewheels mounted in wooden housings on each side of the ship via a walking beam mounted amidships. The walking beam was linked to the piston at one end and a connecting rod at the other.

In 1851 the *Journal of the Franklin Institute,* commenting on the recent installation of walking beam engines in the *Brother Jonathan* and four other steamships, noted the controversial nature of the configuration, stating that the large walking beam, a 10-ton casting elevated 12 to 15 feet above the deck, might seem to cause an imbalance, but went on to declare that the weight of the boilers, and other machinery counter-balanced the huge casting. Further:

> Thus, the recent introduction of the ordinary beam engine of our river boats into several sea steamers of magnitude has been so far attended with complete success, and has gradually replaced the earlier favorite, the side-lever engine.[1]

Not widely known was the fact that the power plant had been salvaged from another sidewheel steamer, the wreck of the *S.S. Atlantic.*[2] It was standard practice at the time not to publicize anything negative about new ships in accounts of their launching and trial voyages, as such might bring bad luck.

In addition to the steam cylinder and linkage, two masts (later increased to three) provided power in favorable winds and provided a respite for the coal passers below decks who worked night and day feeding the fiery furnaces.

The new ship had three decks, the upper two reserved for passengers, crew quarters, officers' rooms, and social functions. Cargo capacity in her holds and on deck was about 500 tons.

Passenger accommodations on the *Brother Jonathan* were provided for 350 to 365 travelers, most of whom bunked in the lower part of the ship in simple berths in the steerage section, which was said to be better than the average below-decks quarters on many contemporary ships. For those wishing to pay a higher fare, 24 staterooms offered extra amenities including food and beverages delivered on order, a writing desk or table, individual wash basins, wall-mounted mirrors, a door that could be locked, and space for storing trunks and baggage.

At the center of the main deck (one deck down from the top) was the passenger lounge or saloon, about 80 feet long by 20 wide, suitable for relaxation, reading, games, storytelling, musical performances, and other pursuits. This was the ship's most important attraction for the passengers with first-cabin (first class) or second-cabin tickets. The white-painted wood-paneled lounge in the *Brother Jonathan* was decorated with paintings, ornate carvings, gold trim, and other artistic touches, with oil cloth carpeting of "bright and variegated colors."[3] Chairs and settees in the lounge were covered with rich maroon plush upholstery and provided seating for 100 to 200 people. The lounge could be

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* as she appeared in 1850 shortly after launching. (Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers,* Vol. I, after a lithograph by Endicott)

entered by stairs, or by doors to the sides. The 24 staterooms were arranged 12 to each side of the lounge, with access through the lounge itself or from the deck.

Owner Edward Mills emphasized low-cost tickets and, accordingly, attracted passengers with little money to spend. The typical voyager aboard the ship in the early days had little financial worth at present, but hoped to make his fortune in the land of gold. Meanwhile, with better times in the offing, some travel inconvenience could be endured. Besides, steerage on the *Brother Jonathan* was far more comfortable than bouncing around in a wagon or being jolted on horseback on the overland route to California. For the captain and certain insiders on the crew, the unofficial sale for cash of steerage spaces to last-minute passengers yielded extra income, with the ship's owners being none the wiser. It seems that space could be found for as many who wanted to come aboard, and if there were not enough berths, latecomers could sleep in hallways, on the floor, or on deck. Similarly, if there were a few unoccupied

[1] Information from DSR historical files. • *The People's Journal,* November 1853, p. 30, in a discussion of the new vessel, the *S.S. Golden Age,* noted that the walking beam controversy was still a topic of discussion: "The introduction of beam engines for ocean steamers is a new feature in steam navigation. Many consider their success problematical, while others are confident that for power, economy, freedom from disorder, and in every other requisite, they are superior to the side levers. The success of the *Golden Age* will settle the whole question." The *Golden Age* was a very large ship, 285 feet in length and of 2,864 tons, and was built for long ocean voyages such as from New York to Liverpool or even from Australia to America. The steam cylinder, fired by boilers measuring 40 feet long, had a diameter of 85 inches and a stroke of 12 feet. In later years, she was in the Pacific Coast trade out of San Francisco. • The walking beam type of engine (originally, *working* beam) was hardly new, and Boulton & Watt had made such devices in the form of stationery engines in England in the preceding century. Regarding ships, the half-brig *New York* was equipped with a walking beam engine by Daniel Dod in the 1820s (illustrated in Cedric Ridgely Nevitt, *American Steamships on the Atlantic,* p. 68).

[2] Later comment in *Alta California,* August 2, 1865, and other citations. It was often considered bad luck to use the salvaged usable parts of a wrecked ship in another vessel, although for economic reasons the practice was widespread. Other situations considered to be unfavorable omens included changing the name of a ship and carrying dead bodies aboard.

[3] Franklin Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains, and Mines.* Subsequently quoted in the present text.

cabins, steerage passengers could upgrade by paying the steward.

On an uncrowded voyage in calm seas, steerage accommodations earned high marks from travelers. In stormy seas or with the ship filled to or exceeding normal capacity, steerage travel could be miserable, especially during transit through the tropical zones.

The hull of the ship was painted black with the gunwales in dark blue. The houses on the deck were painted a sandy or buff color. Her wheel boxes, done in black and red, were each ornamented with gilt eagles on the side panels. A large golden eagle carving was mounted on the stern. (A large free-standing eagle carving from the ship illustrated with each of the chapter headings in the present book).

Under full steam the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* must have presented an impressive sight. At night, the light from her cabin lamps could be seen at a distance, and from the central stack a reddish plume of fire, sparks, and smoke from the boilers extended into the sky.[1]

The Ship's Name

As a ship name *Brother Jonathan* had pleasant connotations, much as did *Young America*, *Uncle Sam*, and *Yankee*, all evocative of the national spirit. Brother Jonathan was a popular term for America as part of the "family" of lands in the British empire or once a part of it, an early-day counterpart of Uncle Sam. In the same vein, England was sometimes known as John Bull.

Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography, under the entry for American patriot Jonathan Trumbull (1710-1785), includes this:[2]

> The epithet "Brother Jonathan," now applied to a personification of the United States, is supposed to owe its origin to [George] Washington's habit of addressing Gov. Trumbull, and to the phrase he often used when perplexed: "Let us hear what Brother Jonathan says."

A clever Yankee in America's first stage comedy, *The Contrast*, by Royall Tyler, produced in 1787, was named Brother Jonathan. It was not long until Brother Jonathan was a nickname, a casual synonym for the United States. The term was often used in cartoons and elsewhere to denote a shrewd or clever young boy or an American citizen contemplating some new turn of politics or invention.

In 1842 the *Brother Jonathan*, published in New York, became America's first illustrated weekly paper. Following the laying of the Atlantic Cable in 1858, New York City engraver George H. Lovett cut dies for a medalet depicting John Bull (as England) and Brother Jonathan (as America) exchanging lightning bolts across the sea.[3] The symbolism was evident to everyone.

BROTHER JONATHAN'S NEW BABY.

In early 1857 it was announced that the old copper "large" cent would be discontinued, and a new, small cent would supersede it, with a Flying Eagle motif substituting for the former Liberty Head and stars. *Harper's Weekly*, February 21, 1857, called the new Flying Eagle cent, of smaller diameter and made of copper-nickel alloy, "Brother Jonathan's New Baby." Newspaper editors had been sent patterns dated 1856 as "samples," and it is an 1856-dated cent that is shown. Today, such pieces are highly prized and are in great demand by collectors.

About the *S.S. Atlantic*

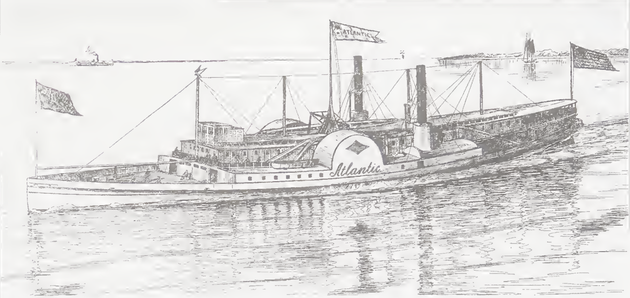
The 320-foot, 1,112-ton *S.S. Atlantic*, which yielded its steam engine to the *Brother Jonathan*, had been built in 1846 by Bishop & Simonson, New York, at a cost of about $150,000.[4] T.F. Secor & Co. of the same city installed the vertical beam engine with a six-foot diameter cylinder with an 11-foot stroke. Launched in May of the same year, she was operated by the Norwich & New London Steamboat Company on the heavily traveled and very profitable route through the waters of Long Island Sound from New York City to New London, Connecticut. It was in Long Island Sound a decade earlier than Cornelius Vanderbilt laid the foundation for his fortune.

[1] In a related context, a description of the coal-fired mail steamer *Uncle Sam* at night, given in the San Francisco *Alta California*, March 9, 1861 (quoted by Kemble, p. 113), noted that there was a "blaze of red fire some 15 feet above the smoke stack." Similarly, numerous illustrations of wood-fired Mississippi River steamers at night show flames, sparks, and smoke pouring from the stacks in a brilliant display (probably to a greater extent than would be seen if the vessels had been coal-fired).

[2] Vol. VI, 1889, p. 168; similarly, *The National Cyclopædia of American Biography*, Vol. X, James T. White Co., 1900, p. 328.

[3] Obverse inscription, at left HOW ARE YOU JONATHAN, at right PURTY WELL OLD FELLER / HOW'S YOURSELF. The reverse bears the advertisement of George H. Lovett, medal and diesinker at 131 Fulton Street, New York; more about Lovett and related medals appears in the book by Q. David Bowers, *American Numismatics Before the Civil War, 1760-1860*, published in 1998.

[4] This account is adapted from Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, Vol. III, pp. 21-22, and other sources.



Artist's representation of the *S.S. Atlantic,* the walking beam engine of which was later installed in the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* (John H. Morrison, *History of American Steam Navigation,* 1903)

The prime rival of the ship was the *S.S. Oregon* operated by George Law.[1] A challenge was mounted for a race to be held between the *Atlantic* and the *Oregon* in December 1846 along a 58 mile course from New York City to the *Stratford* lightboat moored off Bridgeport, Connecticut. Speed contests were all the rage, and the winner would profit immensely from the advertising value derived. However, this particular race was not to be, as the *Atlantic* was damaged by high waves in a nor'easter which came screaming down the Sound on Thanksgiving Day, November 25. The tempestuous sea crests wrenched the hull of the ship and broke her main steam feeder line as she was passing Fisher's Island.[2]

The ship's anchors were lowered to keep her in position, and both smoke stacks and the pilot house were removed in an effort to lessen her resistance to the wind. If she could maintain position, all would be well once the winds subsided. For the next day the *Atlantic* remained at her mooring as the gale maintained full force. Her anchor chains dragged, then broke, and early in the morning of November 27 the ship rammed stern first onto a reef off Fisher's Island. Completely helpless, the *Atlantic* soon broke apart in the crashing waves and churning surf. It is believed that 42 people lost their lives.

Afterward, the steam engine and related apparatus were salvaged and rebuilt. In 1850 the new S.S. *Brother Jonathan* offered the ideal opportunity to use this serviceable equipment.

Early Days of the *Brother Jonathan*

Launching of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* took place on November 2, 1850, at Williamsburgh, located across the East River from Manhattan. On the 27th of the same month the *New York Herald* included this description of the new steamer:

> Her floors are solid, 14 inches in depth, bolted together with 1½" iron; five keelsons and head pieces cadged and bolted to the solid floor. The frame, at the turn of the bilge, is peculiar for its great strength, being additionally secured by strong iron diagonal braces, forming a perfect network from stem to stem; over which is laid yellow pine planking from five to eight inches thick and all square fastened. The decks are of the most substantial description, being thoroughly secured with lodging and hanging knees. The outside is planked with white oak, and well tree-nailed and copper fastened. She has a billet-head and bowsprit, which give her a most neat and beautiful finish.... Her saloon will be fitted up in a chaste but elegant style, with paneling being white enamel and gold, and her arrangements for ventilation are most excellent.

The following account in *Alta California,* March 3, 1851, carried a report forwarded from New York which described the vessel and indicated that she was headed for San Francisco:

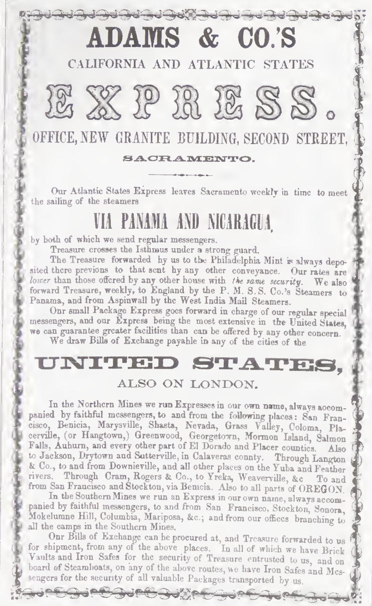
> NEW STEAMSHIP *BROTHER JONATHAN.*
>
> A private letter from Edward Mills, Esq., of New York, speaking of the new and magnificent steamship *Brother Jonathan*, which is now preparing to sail for this port, says:
>
> "She is one of the finest steamers ever built here and is equal to any other in point of speed–she has fine lines and

[1] Law was a shipping entrepreneur whose name would be given later to the sidewheel steamer S.S. *George Law,* the name of which was changed in 1857 to the S.S. *Central America* (which met its fate in a hurricane off the coast of North Carolina on September 12 of the same year; this ship is discussed in Chapter 6 in connection with coinage of 1857).

[2] Several nineteenth century studies give the date of the wreck incorrectly as 1848; this error was perpetuated in the *San Jose* (California) *Courier* in August 1865 in an account related to the *Brother Jonathan.*

[3] Later, the ship's bell was recovered and installed in the Church of the Holy Redeemer; about 1927 it was removed to the Seamen's Institute, New York City, and hung in the main entrance. (Heyl, Vol. III, p. 27.)

great power—no boat has so much in proportion to her size. Her dimensions are 220 feet keel, 36 feet beam, 21 feet deep-solid floors, iron diagonal braces from coaged and keelson. In fact, she is as strong as wood, iron and copper can make her, and will only draw on the river 8½ feet.[1] Her cabins are well ventilated for warm climates, and the saloons finished with white enamel and gold. The engine is 72 inch cylinder, 11 feet stroke, flue boiler 12 feet shell and 28 long; wheel 33 feet in diameter, 9 feet face, 30 inch bucket and 4 feet dip. She is the same power as the celebrated steamers *Oregon*, *Vanderbilt*, and *Bay State*, and I know no reason why she should not have nearly equal speed. I think she is worthy of the regards of the Californians."



In the early 1850s Adams & Co. was a leading factor in the banking and express business, until its failure following "Black Friday," the financial panic of February 23, 1855. Shown above is an advertisement for the firm's Sacramento office, noting: "Our Atlantic States Express leaves Sacramento weekly in time to meet the sailing of the steamers VIA PANAMA AND NICARAGUA, by both of which we send regular messengers. The Treasure forwarded by us to the Philadelphia Mint is always deposited there previous to that sent by any other conveyance. Our rates are *lower* than those offered by any other house with *the same security*. We also forward Treasure, weekly, to England...." In 1851 J. Goldsborough Bruff was an agent for Adams and cared for its shipments on the voyage discussed in the accompanying narrative. (*Sacramento Directory, 1853-1854*)

The *Brother Jonathan*, from all we can learn, is superior in point of comfort to any vessel yet launched for this trade, and was built under the direction of E. Mills, Esq., her owner.

However, for the time being the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* stayed in the Atlantic Ocean.

The California trade in 1850-1851 was composed of two links by sea: the Atlantic Coast run down through the Caribbean Sea to the town of Chagres in Panama, continuing by overland connection (accomplished by a combination of small boats and pack animals), and ending with the Pacific Coast link from Panama to San Francisco. Later, connections across land were made through Nicaragua as well.

After launching, the *Brother Jonathan* went into the Atlantic service for Mills' aptly-named New York and Chagres Express Line connecting those two places. Despite the title of the operating company, the trip was not quite "express," as a stop was made at Kingston, Jamaica. Her first trip was made in early 1851.

Chagres, on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama, was the port of call for steamers from New York and New Orleans carrying passengers and freight for connections to the west. Soon thereafter, a town was built nearby on a filled-in swamp. On February 2, 1852, the new settlement was given the name Aspinwall, for William H. Aspinwall, founder and president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which in 1847 had obtained the contract for Pacific Coast mail service.[2] Later, Aspinwall was renamed Colon, the designation still used today.

By 1851, the Gold Rush, which had begun in a large way for easterners in 1849, was still in its ascendancy, and each month saw ships carrying hopeful treasure seekers emigrating to the West. With appointments said to be finer than those of competing ships the *Brother Jonathan* was a favorite of steerage-class passengers as well as those who could afford the luxury of private staterooms. The ship fared well on its transits along the East Coast and the Caribbean Sea. The *Brother Jonathan* also made several trips on the alternative route from New York City to San Juan del Norte in Nicaragua.

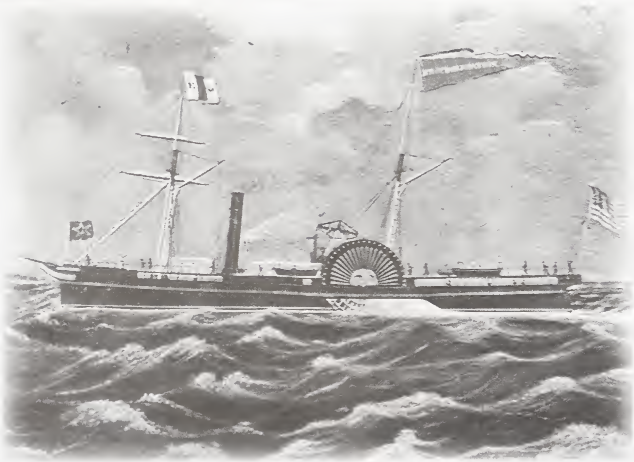
A Voyage Aboard the *Brother Jonathan* in 1851

In July 1851, J. Goldsborough Bruff, a draftsman for the United States Bureau of Topographical Engineers, who had gone to California in 1849, was in Panama awaiting an At-

[1] This probably indicates that thought was given to employing her on the Sacramento River route from San Francisco, a very profitable run at the time.

[2] The first steamer of the Pacific line was the *California*, which entered service in 1849, followed by the *Oregon* and the *Panama*. As the Pacific Ocean was calmer than the Atlantic and the route to Panama from San Francisco was longer than the corresponding route on the Atlantic from Panama to New York, the Pacific steamers were generally larger and more elegantly appointed than their eastern counterparts.

[3] David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, [illegible], p. [illegible]



The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in the early days as shown in a copy of a painting, the original of which is held by the California Historical Society. Her paddlewheel boxes are painted bright red. (Copy of painting courtesy of the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park)

lantic coastal steamer to return to New York City. As luck would have it, that coastal steamer was the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Two years earlier he had organized a party of 60 men–the Washington City and California Gold Mining Association–which had departed from the District of Columbia via the overland route on April 2, 1849. He kept a journal recording in detail his subsequent adventures, including his 1851 trip back to the East by sea. During the journey he was an agent for the Adams Express Company and shepherded the loading, stowing, and unloading of Adams' shipments.

Bruff's *S.S. Brother Jonathan* narrative begins on July 7, 1851, following his crossing of the land bridge between the Pacific with the Atlantic at Panama, including a trip down the Chagres River to the coast:[1]

> At about 6 a.m. we reached Chagres, and hauled in to the bank, through legions of boats and canoes and all sorts of people. Quickly did we make our way ashore, in search of breakfast, and were amazed at meeting so many acquaintances and fellow travelers. The principal house of entertainment is called the "Irving House" and fronts the landing, about 10 paces from it. Breakfast was nearly ready when we reached the house, and a crowd stood around the long table. At the raising of the hand-bell they rushed into the seats, precluding us most effectually from any chance there, so we walked out and continued around the point to where we were told we could obtain a good breakfast. We soon found the shanty of old Joe Prince, and in a few minutes were regaled with an excellent and hearty breakfast, for which we paid 75 cents each....
>
> Many American and English signs are indicative of eating and drinking establishments, such as Jack of Clubs, Davy Crockett, etc. Several billiard houses, with black gamblers around the tables.[2]...
>
> Quite a number of small craft are in the harbor; and boats and canoes innumerable. There were also several square-rigged craft–mostly brigs. The consuls all reside in the old town [Chagres]. The new town [Aspinwall] is almost entirely American, covering the narrow tongue of land which protects the harbor from the sea.
>
> At meridian [noon] I transferred my small amount of luggage to a large rowboat manned by Englishmen, and full of other returning Californians. We pulled out about 2 miles from land, to the Steamer *Brother Jonathan.* The swell increased until we reached the ship, where it was considerable, and required some adroit agility to get safely on board. We each paid the boatmen 2 dollars, and I paid for a cabin ticket in the steamer, 50 dollars. I was highly gratified on getting on board, to find my highly esteemed *comrades du voyage,* on the other side, were also to accompany me in this voyage.[3]...
>
> I am informed that [in recent days while on land at Panama] Major Hobby was robbed, at Cruces, of an overcoat, and Capt. Moore, of funds abstracted from his carpet bag. Capt. Squires, of the *Brother Jonathan,* informs me that robberies and murders are frequent at Chagres, and the Yankees have established lynch law in consequence.
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* is a good sea-boat, with a strong engine, but her accommodations are inconvenient and inappropriate for such service, in such climes: And no regulations usual on board such vessels are enforced. Her burthen is 1,400 tons.
>
> Commander Heber Squires; Sailing Master E. McKeige; H. Dennison, 1st officer; Miller, 2nd officer; H. Sandform, chief engineer; Wm. Mills, purser; Lemuel Wales, M.D., surgeon.
>
> She has on board 61 first class passengers, 7 second class passengers, 156 steerage–and 25 *uncertain* passengers. Total: 249 passengers. The officers of the ship are a very clever set of men. Several steerage passengers exchanged their tickets–paying the difference, for places in the cabin....
>
> At 4 p.m. the swell increased, and the ship rolled heavily. A sailboat brought on board our esteemed friend Judge Jones; and Judge Lyons, being in the boat, returned to shore, to await the steamer for New Orleans....
>
> About 6 p.m. we were heartily glad to find the steamer under way. At 7 the bell summoned us to supper. Hot weather, and a damp and dirty ship.[4] Rain and lightning. A heavy sea, deep rolling of the ship, and suffocating heat below, entirely precluded all ideas of sleep in the staterooms.
>
> About 11 p.m. passed a steamer, which from the color of her lights, is supposed to be the *Crescent City,* going into Chagres....[5]

July 8, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> Commences with flying clouds and heavy swell. Shoals of silvery flying-fish are skimming over the dark green waves, fleeing before our swift craft, no doubt imagining her to be some huge and voracious monster of the deep in pursuit of them.
>
> The trade-wind is quite fresh on our starboard bow. The exhalations from the lower decks of the ship are not very savory. No wonder, for I never saw a dirtier set of forward passengers in any vessel; and their numerous monkeys, parrots, &c. and piles of tropical fruits, peelings, and shells, are sufficient to produce disease enough to set up a perfumery establishment.
>
> There is a great difference in this, the Atlantic, and the Pacific Ocean; at least near the land. The water is of a darker and clearer blue, and more lively and phosphorescent, than the latter. And it is also more susceptible of agitation than the Pacific from some cause or other.
>
> Late in the afternoon the sea subsided a little–the swells are longer and shallower than in the forenoon. There is no comfortable resting place here for the passengers. Below, the heat is insufferable, in contracted apartments, subject to every kind of annoyance, many of the passengers being seasick. On deck, it is damp and dirty, or broiling hot, in the sun. Under the quarter deck and forecastle awnings, the steerage passengers have possession and are rolling all over the decks. So, a few of us have to avail ourselves of the captain's kind invitation and hang around his little cabin on deck.

[1] *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, April 2, 1849 – July 20, 1851,* edited by Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gaines, 1949, pp. 514 ff. Reprinted here are excerpts from a much longer account.

[2] The journal contains many sentence fragments [illegible]; these are not corrected in the present citations.

[3] The reference is to people whom he had met on the Pacific run from San Francisco to Panama aboard the S.S. *California.*

[4] Many accounts of travel to and from Panama on various ships describe the great discomfort due to heat and humidity for the first several days until cooler latitudes are reached. No vessel seems to have been immune from such criticism. Often, passengers would sleep on deck.

[5] The term Crescent City referred to New Orleans, located on a crescent-shaped bend of the Mississippi River, and had nothing to do with the California coastal town of the same name.

July 9, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Flying clouds, strong breeze, and heavy swell, and as heavy a roll of the ship as a moderate man could wish. At 8 a.m. set the fore sail, forestay sail, main-sail, and jib. Squally, with light showers. Handed the stay-sail and jib.

Afternoon, light flying clouds, and strong breeze. Ship goes ahead easier. At 5:30 p.m. a sail on the starboard bow—a schooner running before the wind, under main sail and two jibs. Our decks are very wet.... Night set in cloudy, with a strong breeze. Took in the foresail. Exceedingly warm below. Ship rolls considerably.

July 10, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Hazy weather. Sea head, and smoother, course N.E. – E. Took in sail. Sultry weather.

About 9 a.m. land in view, on the lee bow, bearing N. by E., about 25 miles distant. The dark blue tops of mountains can just be discerned, high, amongst clouds; below which, to the surface of the ocean, is a mass of vapor and dove-colored clouds. This land is the high range on the island of Jamaica.

At 3 p.m. we were boarded by a canoe, under a sprit-sail, and received a Negro pilot. We had made land about 25 miles to the windward of Port Royal, and had to run down for it. Steaming up the harbor of Port Royal, we were boarded by the health officer, which detained us a few minutes: at 4 p.m. we hauled into the wharf at Kingston.

The passengers leaped ashore as soon as they could, and I accompanied some friends ashore, just to see how the place looked since the slave emancipation, as I had visited it just before that [illegible] event.[1] We made our way to the Commer[illegible] [illegible] Goldsborough we had an excellent supper [illegible]

July 11, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

[illegible]

July 12, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

[illegible]

[illegible] at 8 p.m. cleared it. A considerable swell, and the ship rolls much in the trough of the sea. Lightning in clouds ahead of us. Set our three principal lower sails. The thermometer stands too high for me to sleep in the lower berth of the stateroom.

July 13, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Clear. Wind abaft of the beam, and light; smooth sea; all sail set. Early in the morning abreast of Castle Island (Crooked Island passage). The islands on our starboard side are distant 8 or 10 miles.

9 a.m. Within 2 miles, abreast, of Fortune Island, on which is a small town. 11 a.m. clear of the land, and now have a clean run of 1,000 miles to New York.

After dinner, took in all sail except the main-sail. A strong breeze on the starboard bow; temperature more agreeable than any since we left San Diego.[3] The night was clear and pleasant, and I sat up some hours after supper. Ship makes about 9 knots per hour.[4] A good night's repose.

July 14, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Clear, with very light airs, and smooth sea. Headway of 9½ knots per hour. An abortive meeting of malcontents in the steerage—they have cause of complaint in this ship, but if their fare is not as good as that of the cabin, they enjoy other privileges, not inferior, that we would be glad to have—the entire decks are theirs....

1 p.m. light wind on the larboard side. Set all sail. A light shower of rain passed over us. At 5½ p.m. small rain squalls blowing over, for a short time, then cloudy, with a pleasant breeze, and smooth sea; all sails set, and ship making 11 knots. At 9 p.m. a flaw of wind carried away our fore-top mast. It happened to be too small and insufficiently stayed.

July 15, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Flying clouds, pleasant breeze, and smooth sea. Making 10 knots.

9 a.m., a sail ahead, proved to be a hermaphrodite brig[5] standing to the S.S.E. and under all sail, except her topsail. Our course is N.

Afternoon, breeze decreased. 6 p.m. a topsail schooner to leeward, standing to the N.W. A bark on our weather (starboard) side, standing S.S.E. At dusk a schooner on the weather bow. The breeze failing, and drawing ahead. Sails handed.

July 16, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Near day set sail. Course N. a slight haze in the morning. Two square-rigged vessels, with steering sails set, ahead of us and standing N.N.E. Smooth sea, and light breeze; all sail set, on starboard side. Several vessels in sight, on both sides. A brig on the lee bow appears to be standing to the N.N.E. A

[1] [illegible] emancipation had been proclaimed in Jamaica 13 years [illegible] August 1, 1838.

[2] [illegible] shaft driving the side paddlewheels.

[3] [illegible] California visited by Brutt on the Pacific leg of his trip.

[4] [illegible] usage, a knot is a unit of speed (not distance) equal to one nautical mile, or 1.15 statute (land) miles, per hour.

[5] [illegible] with two masts, the mainmast schooner rigged and the fore [illegible] rigged.

ship and bark standing in for land, and a small schooner to the eastward.

At sunset three sails were in sight.

July 17, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> Hazy and nearly calm. Handed the sails. Many sails in sight, most of which are ahead and inshore of us. At 9 a.m. we passed a small schooner on the opposite course. 10 a.m. set the sails, with a light breeze, source N. – E. 4 p.m., light airs; clewed up the fore-sail. Barnegat and the Highlands in sight ahead. Sails numerous.
>
> Pilot-boat No. 5 passed us.
>
> A paper, complimentary to the officers of the ship, and condemnatory of her arrangements and accommodations, and signed by the after passengers, was handed to the captain.
>
> At 6 p.m. displayed our colors. At 7 p.m. a pilot-boat bearing down, took in sail, and luffed. Confusion and vexation among the steerage passengers, on missing many Panama hats, &c., stolen by the hands of the vessel. The forecastle was searched, resulting in finding several of the stolen articles, and restoring them. Some rogue below pushed a Panama hat through an air-port, while the search was going on. I have lost a pair of slippers and several other small articles.
>
> Received our pilot, and stood up for the harbor of New York. Detained in the night, some time, off the Quarantine at Staten Island, waiting for the health officer. After his visit, we ran up. After much bungling managed to get the ship to her berth by 10 p.m. Some of the passengers became so impatient that they jumped into boats and landed long before the ship was secured. On reaching the wharf, most of the passengers left. I would not trust the Express baggage and my own to the set of characters who wished to get hold of them, so determined to remain on board all night. I sat up late, conversing with a clever gentlemanly inspector of the Customs, till near midnight, when I retired to my stateroom and slept very soundly, notwithstanding a large brilliant globe lantern near the door of my stateroom and loud talk and laughter of the servants.

July 18, 1851, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> I arose at 6 a.m. awaiting Adams Express car, for their baggage [for Bruff was an agent for Adams].... My own baggage was relieved...and sent to the Merchants' Hotel, where I went also.... Upon opening my trunk, to obtain money for some necessary purchases, I found that it had been thoroughly over hauled and robbed of everything of value I possessed except my books and drawings. Those villainous hands of the steamer had taken my trunk out of my stateroom, carried it into another room, and examined it through, robbed it, and then put it back in my stateroom, alongside of me. The night before, I happened to awake, at a late hour, and caught one of the servants just entering the room, who retreated on seeing me awake. It was my opinion that the same fellow and a barber were the rogues, for they were intimate, and of the articles stolen, there were two razor-strops and a couple of good razors, leaving an indifferent razor in the trunk.
>
> I started down the street, intending to go on board the steamer and have the suspected hands arrested, but had proceeded only a few squares when I met with one of the passengers who had also been robbed of several hundred dollars—carpet bag and all. He told me that I might save myself the trouble of proceeding further—that the ship hands had left her, and it was all confusion on board. So I retraced my steps to the hotel.

July 18, 1851, account in the *New-York Tribune:*

> The steamship *Brother Jonathan,* Capt. H. Squier, arrived at this port last night about 11 o'clock, from Chagres, which port she left on the evening of the 7th inst. She brings 138 passengers.[1] The amount of gold dust[2] in the hands of passengers is estimated at $465,000....

Incidents

During 1851 the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was involved in two separate controversial incidents when passengers who had bought through-trip tickets from New York to San Francisco were landed at Panama, but could not complete their connections on the western leg. In both instances the relatively penurious passengers who had paid for cheap tickets through Edward Mills' agency in New York City became stranded when the higher-priced Pacific Mail Steamship Co. would not honor their tickets unless they paid a large surcharge.

The first situation was precipitated when eager passengers who had arrived at Chagres from New York on the *Brother Jonathan* anticipated boarding the *S.S. Union* on the Pacific side and continuing their trip up the West Coast. However, the *Union* never arrived. That steamer, with 236 passengers and $270,000 in gold coins aboard, was wrecked early in the morning of July 5, 1851, on the way down from San Francisco, when her helmsman, who with the rest of the crew was drunk from their Fourth of July celebration, fell asleep.[3] The ship ran into a sand reef off Rosario in Baja California at high tide. All people aboard, their baggage, and the gold coins were brought a mile and a half through shallow water to the shore. Help was secured from San Diego, with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's S.S. *Northerner* putting into San Quentin Bay on July 19 and taking the travelers to a close port.[4] Meanwhile, the stranded S.S. *Union* was pounded into fragments by the surf. Com-

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[1] In his journal entry of July 7, 1851, Bruff had [illegible] passengers. Seemingly at least a part of the discrepancy [illegible] from the common practice of the ship's officers receiving [illegible] directly to them, such not [illegible] on the company's [illegible]. Further, there may have been some [illegible] of a few passengers at Kingston, Jamaica, for changes to other routes [illegible] tion to New Orleans.

[2] Popular newspaper term for gold [illegible].

[3] The 180-foot, 593-ton S.S. *Union* [illegible] Philadelphia and outfitted [illegible] by Reaney, Neafie & Co. [illegible] drove a four-bladed propeller. She departed New York [illegible] for San Francisco on October [illegible], 1850, but did not reach her destination until April of the following year. On the West Coast the *Union* [illegible] Independent Line, later becoming part of the [illegible]. On July [illegible] 1851, she left San Francisco on her last voyage.

[4] The 203-foot, 1,103-ton *Northerner* was built in New York in [illegible] by William H. Brown and was outfitted with engines by the Novelty Iron Works. She was in service until January [illegible] when she was [illegible] a rock with a loss of [illegible] lives.

pounding the problem was the refusal of Mills' agent at Panama to give a refund to the hapless passengers for the unused portion of the trip.

The second problem was similar. Passengers aboard the *Brother Jonathan* arrived in Chagres, made the Panama land crossing, and expected to continue north on the Pacific Ocean on the *S.S. Monumental City.*[1] However, that ship, which was known for its slow pace of travel, failed to arrive at Panama from San Francisco on schedule, and no information was at hand to apprise the travelers of what was expected next. Denied a refund by Mills' agent and without scheduled passage north to California, the stranded passengers held a stormy meeting to protest the situation, and were finally granted refunds of $70 each on tickets costing $110, after which they secured berths on a mail steamer traveling to their intended destination.

Such incidents, and those involving other steamship lines, were quite common. Many travelers who had intended to spend just a few days at the most in Panama found themselves stranded for several weeks or even longer.

In reflection of certain problems on the Pacific leg of the trip, the accommodations for which were outside of owner Edward Mills' direct authority, he submitted this letter to the *New York Herald:*[2]

> The California passengers must admit that I have reduced the passage one half, since I commenced running the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, and if they meet with some little detention on the Pacific side, which is rather beyond my control, they will, upon reflection, give me credit for some advantage to themselves, the scandalous and abusive stories of the agents and runners of the monopoly notwithstanding.

Passenger Satisfaction

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* continued to enjoy financial success on the New York to Panama run through March 1852. In addition to her Panama service, incomplete existing records indicate that the ship picked up passengers in Nicaragua in October 1851, arriving in New York City on the 29th of the month. The same trip was soon repeated.

A letter from dissatisfied Nicaragua route passengers who had booked on Vanderbilt ships from San Francisco to Nicaragua, continuing to New York, reflects an incident similar to those already related, except this was Nicaragua, not Panama, and the problem was with a missing ship on the Atlantic side. The travelers coming from California to the East had been isolated on the eastern side of Nicaragua in November 1851 with no New York steamer in sight:

> [We were stranded at Grey Town] not knowing how long, or take our chance of passage in the first steamer that came in. The *Brother Jonathan* was daily expected from Chagres, and the agent at Grey Town told us he would endeavor to transfer us to the *Jonathan* when the *Jonathan* arrived. They refused the transfer, and we were obliged either to remain there during the prevalence of an epidemic, or pay our passage again [without assistance from the Vanderbilt line for payment already made] on board the *Jonathan*, the last of which we resolved upon.

With passengers already on board from Chagres plus the double-paying ex-Vanderbilt passengers from Nicaragua, the *Brother Jonathan* arrived in New York City on November 28, 1851, with about 400 travelers plus the crew.[3]

A run from New York to Nicaragua departed on December 2, indicating that more business had been anticipated from that place, and the *Brother Jonathan* was taking advantage of the opportunity.[4]

The service aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on the Atlantic in 1851-1852 is said by some to have represented the glory days of comfort and elegance on that popular route. Business was brisk as an ever-increasing number of easterners left their homes and businesses and departed for the new El Dorado in the West. Passengers enjoyed their voyage aboard the *Brother Jonathan* according to such accounts, and, if they traveled the route more than once, often rebooked on the same ship.

As in any era and virtually any mode of transportation, it was likely that if a survey had been taken of 10 different travelers aboard the *Brother Jonathan* in the 1850s, 10 different opinions, experiences, and ratings of desirability would be obtained. There is no doubt that such elements as bad weather and overcrowding made certain voyages unpleasant, while fine weather and a light passenger load produced enjoyable travel. Recall that J. Goldsborough Bruff had his uncomfortable passage in July, the hottest time of summer.

Vanderbilt as Owner

In March 1852 Cornelius (known as "Commodore," although he never earned this naval rank) Vanderbilt acquired the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* from Edward Mills, reconfigured it to accommodate 750 passengers, and put it on the San Francisco to San Juan del Sud (Pacific Ocean port at Nicaragua) route.

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[1] Monumental City was the nickname for Baltimore, where the ship was built by Murray & Hazelhurst in 1850; the city was renowned for its many civic monuments including the original Washington Monument on Mount Vernon Square. The ship was 180 feet in length and of 737-ton displacement. On November 14, 1850, she departed Baltimore for San Francisco, arriving after a trip with unexpected delays. The ship was chartered by the Empire City Line. Subsequently, the *Monumental City* made only two trips on the Panama run, one in autumn 1851 and the other in the following spring. Later in 1852 she was chartered to Cornelius Vanderbilt and ran to San Juan del Sud on the coast of Nicaragua, where she was moored, soon to be sold to Peter Stroebed, later entering the Australian route. Her career on the Pacific was short-lived, and on May 13, 1853, she was wrecked with a loss of 33 lives.

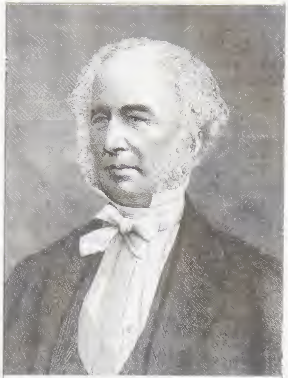
[2] John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1849-1869*, 1943, pp. 62-63. *Herald* publication date not given.

[3] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, 1938, pp. 66-68. The letter also told of very unsatisfactory arrangements provided by Vanderbilt for the land crossing at Nicaragua.

[4] David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, p. 153. This superbly researched study is the finest single source seen for information on the Nicaragua route.

At the time, connections between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans at the narrow land area in Central America were usually made overland through Panama, by a combination of river craft and travel by mule or small coach through thick jungle. In 1855 the Panama Railroad was completed, after which time the land crossing was greatly simplified.

A shorter route time-wise was across a much wider stretch of land to the north in Nicaragua, but the overland travel at that point entailed more difficulties. On the eastern side a combination of small steamers on the San Juan River took passengers into the interior, where the immense and fortunately situated Lake Nicaragua offered a vast expanse of deep water. On the western side the journey was completed by about 12 miles of land on a path that was eventually macadamized, a far pleasanter travel experience than the dense jungles of Panama.



Cornelius ("Commodore") Vanderbilt in his later years, a self-made American millionaire who laid the foundation for his fortune in the steamship trade on the East Coast, but who later became prominent on the route from New York to California via Nicaragua and, later, Panama. (*Great Fortunes and How They Were Made*)

Historian Hubert Howe Bancroft gave this view of the overland journey as taken by a traveler headed toward California:[1]

> By the Nicaragua route passengers disembarked on the Atlantic side at San Juan del Norte, otherwise known as Greytown. Stepping from the ocean steamer on board a steam river craft, they ascended the San Juan River to the Machucha Rapids, where thy landed and walked a portage of about a mile, while the luggage was conveyed up the rapids in bongos manned by naked, long-haired, tawny natives. Above the Machucha Rapids, smaller steamboats carried them to the Castillo Rapids, where there was another portage of a half a mile. Then taking another and a larger steamboat, they continued up the river to San Cárlos, crossed Lake Nicaragua to La Virgen, and thence proceeded overland by mules, or on foot, to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific, where they re-embarked on board an ocean steamer for San Francisco.
>
> The whole distance is about 165 miles, though including the bends in the river it is oftener reckoned at more. Seventy-five miles on the river, the same on the lake, and 12 or 15 miles overland to the ocean. By the Panamá route...about 70 miles were traveled in crossing. Though the distance from ocean to ocean was greater by the Nicaragua route, the land travel was less; and from New York to San Francisco, via Nicaragua, the whole distance was about 1,000 miles shorter than by way of Panamá....
>
> In the scenery there is more variety and grandeur along the river and Lake Nicaragua than up the Chagres and across to Panamá. San Juan del Norte is an old Spanish town consisting of about 50 bamboo and thatched houses, with some shingled tenements of later date, containing at the time of which I write [the 1850s] an extremely mixed population of about 500. The town is situated in a small cove formed by a long narrow strip of land known as Punta Arenas, which from the steamer looks more like an island than a cape. The surrounding country is low and unhealthful, and the surface densely matted with tufted grass and undergrowth mingled with forests of smooth-barked vine-clad trees. Turkey buzzards, alligators, and monkeys claim equal rights with mongrel men to the occupation and enjoyment of the country.
>
> Steam was employed in making the ascent of the San Juan River.... Small stern-wheel boats plied from rapid to rapid and across the lake; into them were driven promiscuously, men, women, and children of all classes, black, white, and mulatto, and herded like cattle without privacy or restraint, without rooms or berths. Thus were the tired travelers kept for two or three nights; the decent and refined portion continually hearing the vile language of the obscene and blasphemous.... At an island 18 miles from the bay, whose keeper had a small white neat board house and a garden, the steamboat stopped to wood....
>
> At Castillo Rapids there is a town called Castillo, of about 100 inhabitants, and standing on a hill nearby an old ruined fort, which in its palmy days presented formidable opposition to unfriendly ascents of the river.... There were several hotels at Castillo, and passengers sometimes rested there for the night.
>
> Approaching the lakes, the flora dwindles to low bushy palms and short coarse grass. At San Carlos, at the outlet of Lake Nicaragua, there is a dilapidated fort similar to Fort Castillo, though less formidable. Between the fortress and the lake is a town of about 25 small thatched houses.
>
> Lake Nicaragua presents a scene of rare sublimity. The oblong inland sea, 100 miles and more in length by 60 miles in width, its waters isle-dotted and crystalline, basks under a tropical sky of livid purple tone, and from its swelling shores hills and mountains lift themselves into mists thickened by smoking volcanic peaks. Rising from the very midst of the water is the slumbering volcano Ometepe, with its twin brother Madera, whose cone shaped crests are four and five thousand feet above the surface of the lake, and whose circumference at the base is nearly 40 miles. On its western shore is Virgin Bay, a dirty little town with a dozen dirty little taverns, where passengers feed, and swing their hammocks for the night. During the day one may bathe here in safety, as it is said the alligators frequent this portion of the lake only during the night. Very kind of the alligators.
>
> Across the narrow strip of land, the only bar to uninterrupted water communication between the two oceans, travelers proceed on mules and donkeys, women riding some sideways and some astride. The ride is delightful. Half way the road is level and straight, covered by a dark forest so dense in

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula*, 1888, pp. 198-20[illegible].

> places that there seems scarcely standing room for the trees.... The remainder of the road winds through rolling hills, then scales a lofty mountain, and descends to the sea. Thirty board houses, shingled and painted, stretch along the shore of a small bay constitutes the town of San Juan del Sur.... The shelving beach does not permit the small boats to approach nearer than about 25 yards from the water's edge, and passengers must be carried aboard on the backs of the boatmen. Here steamers anchor about 150 yards from land....

The advantages of the "Panama Route" vs. the "Nicaragua Route" furnished headlines for many advertisements. Vanderbilt, who had close connections and a contract with the government of Nicaragua, popularized the route across that country. If all went well, the time advantage seemed to be about two days vs. the Panama connection, but savings of up to six days were claimed. As noted by Bancroft, the overland scenery was much finer for those who chose Nicaragua, but on either route there could be problems of cholera, greedy local tradesmen, broken promises for inland conveyance, bandits and other scoundrels, altered schedules, broken equipment, poor food, and a litany of other grievances. However, difficulties seemed to beset Nicaragua travelers to a greater degree.[1] For those shipping valuable cargo including gold coins and bars, there was a slight saving on freight charges and insurance via Nicaragua.

At the termini of the Nicaragua route there were numerous shops selling souvenirs, among the most popular of which were brightly-colored tropical parrots, which on the next leg of the trip often caused a great nuisance for everyone except the proud new owners. Such birds were favorites of Panama route travelers as well.

Refitting the Ship

After being refitted by Vanderbilt for Nicaragua service the *Brother Jonathan* was equipped with three masts and her steam engine was advertised as 400 horsepower, although it seems that the rating was the same as before.[2] The clipper-style bowsprit was eliminated. The single smokestack was enlarged and moved closer to the paddlewheels. Indeed, "the entire appearance of the ship was radically changed."[3] However, the elegance of the ship was maintained or even increased, and one traveler likened it to an "imperial palace."[4]

Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt (1794-1877) was known in the early days for his filthy ships, spartan accommodations and disregard for passengers' interest or safety. Emphasis was solely on profits to be made. In one particularly memorable eight-month period in the 1850s, three of his steamers were wrecked. Many complaints about his poor service reached print. Historian John Haskell Kemble commented:[5]

> Vanderbilt's ships maintained a reputation which was hardly enviable. They were described in the press of both coasts as "floating pig sties" and "half manned and badly provisioned," and their safety was characterized as the "[illegible] of the sea"

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* as refitted by Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1852 for use on the Nicaragua route. The sidewheel steamer now has three masts in place of the former two, the stack has been moved back to just fore of the walking beam, and the clipper-ship style bowsprit has been eliminated, among other changes. The interior of the ship was attractively appointed, with the main lounge resembling an "imperial palace," according to one observer. (Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, Vol. I, after an image provided by the Marine Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest)

Erik Heyl, another marine historian of renown, echoed the sentiments:[6]

> Some exceedingly bitter denunciations of Vanderbilt and the filthy conditions of his steamers, the poor and often spoiled food, and the ignorance and insolence of his captains and crews were published in the San Francisco daily newspapers. It was alleged that some of the Vanderbilt captains had never had any high-seas experience, but had been ferry-boat captains before being put in charge of the Pacific steamers.

Revisionism: Vanderbilt's Flawless Record

In 1853 Vanderbilt stated that he had a personal net worth of $11,000,000 and was earning an annual return of 25% on that figure. By 1858 he was worth an estimated $20 million, which he used to advantage in the burgeoning field of railroading. He acquired shares in the Harlem Railroad and the Hudson River Railroad, both out of New York City. Later, he and his family became prominent in the New

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 140 ff., among other sources. Re: Nicaragua, p. 141: "Scenery and climate surpassed those of Panama, but the management was inferior, the intermediate transportation insufficient and less reliable, owing to low water [on the rivers on the Atlantic side], etc., and little attention was paid to the health or comfort of the passengers."

[2] Accounts differ, but it seems clear from multiple sources that the original engine—the one taken from the wreck of the S.S. *Atlantic*—was retained. Heyl, Vol. I, lists identical specifications for the engines of the *Atlantic* and the *Brother Jonathan*; later (1865) accounts would state that the *Brother Jonathan* still had the *Atlantic* equipment installed. Thus, unless some sort of improvements were installed during Vanderbilt's make-over, the horsepower was probably rated at 400 earlier as well.

[3] Erik Heyl, Vol. I, p. 64.

[4] Franklin Langworthy, 1853, subsequently quoted in full.

[5] *The Panama Route, 1848-1869*, p. 96, for this specific quotation attributed to the *San Francisco Alta California*, July 14, 1860; numerous other comments in the same vein are given elsewhere in the text.

[6] *Early American Steamers*, 1952, p. 407, in an account of the negligent breakdown at sea of Vanderbilt's steamer *Samuel S. Lewis*.

York Central Railroad, from which point the Vanderbilt fortune multiplied many times over.

In time, Vanderbilt's justifiably *satanized* reputation earned in the steamer trade was *sanitized*. His family became involved in many charitable and other worthwhile pursuits and various members became pillars of high society, along the way constructing mansions (in Newport, Rhode Island, and Asheville, North Carolina, among other places) that eclipsed much of their social competition in the Upper 400. A new generation of writers who either were not aware of or chose not to draw upon abundant original source material from the early nineteenth century, turned out a stream of hagiographic commentary about the Commodore and his great contributions to the quality of life in America. As is often the case with modern historical commentaries, many articles and even books have relied upon easily available information (such as his obituary in the *New York Times*, which glowed with praise, as obituaries of business leaders nearly always do).

During the Civil War, Cornelius Vanderbilt was lionized by Congress, reflected in this lovely medal first struck in 1865 from dies by Salathiel Ellis. (T. Harrison Garrett Collection, The Johns Hopkins University)

As an example, compare reality with this glowing account of Vanderbilt excerpted from James D. McCabe, Jr.'s 1871 book, *Great Fortunes and How They Were Made*, which bears the subtitle, *Struggles and Triumphs of our Self-Made Men:*

> [In 1829 at the age of 35, Vanderbilt] resolved to build a steamer of his own, and had saved thirty thousand dollars.... He built a small steamer, called the *Caroline*, which he commanded himself. In a few years he was the owner of several other small steamers plying between New York and the neighboring towns. He made slow progress at first, for he had strong opposition to overcome....
>
> He made his way gradually in the business, until he rose to the head of the steamboat interests in the United States. He has owned or been interested in 100 steam vessels, and has been instrumental in a greater degree than any other man in bringing down the tariff of steamboat fares.
>
> He never builds a vessel without giving his personal superintendence to every detail, so that all his various craft have been models of their kind. He selects his officers with the greatest care, pays them liberal salaries, and as long as they do their duty, sustains them against all outside interference or intrigue. In this way he inspires them with zeal, and the result is that he has never lost a vessel by fire, explosion, or wreck.

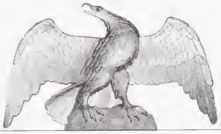
The apotheosis of Commodore Vanderbilt seems to have begun during the Civil War, when he was honored by Congress for his 1862 donation of a ship bearing his name to the Union cause.[1] In 1865 Salathiel Ellis cut the dies for a medal depicting him on the obverse, surrounded by the inscription: A GRATEFUL COUNTRY TO HER GENEROUS SON CORNELIUS VANDERBILT. The reverse depicts Neptune as a *woman*, kneeling, with a steamship in the background.

In the opposite of Shakespeare's lines, the bad seems to have been interred with Vanderbilt's bones, leaving only the good to be remembered (except by *serious* historians of nineteenth century American shipping). Today Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, honors him, in recognition of a gift of $1 million which motivated the Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church South to change its name. By any accounting, Cornelius Vanderbilt and his heirs loomed large on the American social and transportation scene of the second half of the nineteenth century, and any chronicle of these activities must of necessity include them. However, as an idol of capitalism, the Commodore had clay feet.

[1] Among the descriptions of his donation and the subsequent medal, the most extensive in a *numismatic* book is in J. F. Loubat, *The Medallic History of the United States of America 1776-1876*, pp. [illegible].

[2] R. W. Julian, *Medals of the United States Mint: The First Century 1792-1892*, p. 225, there listed as No. PE-36. The medals measure [illegible] and were struck in quantity in copper beginning years later in [illegible].

Chapter Eight



The Brother Jonathan *in the Pacific*

Under the Vanderbilt Flags

On May 14, 1852, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* departed New York City. C.H. Baldwin was at the helm,[1] assisted by George Hutchinson (first officer), Hiram Sanford (chief engineer), L.V. Hogeboom (first assistant engineer), Dan Saltus (second assistant engineer), and C.A. Low (purser).[2] She was headed to San Francisco, to become a part of Gold Rush lore and legend.

In due course, after a trip of many weeks around the tip of South America, she arrived on the West Coast, where she was placed into the trade between Nicaragua and San Francisco. After operating the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* for slightly more than half a year, on December 31, 1852, Cornelius Vanderbilt transferred the title to it and his other ships to the Accessory Transit Company, which in time, *sans* Vanderbilt in a visible role, became known as the Nicaragua Steamship Company. Under this flag Vanderbilt continued to maintain an interest in the ship through the summer of 1853.[3] By arrangement with Accessory Transit, his share was 20% of the gross *receipts* of Accessory Transit, a very generous dividend as Vanderbilt had no concern whether a profit was being made by the company. He was a winner in any event.

Sold to Accessory Transit for $1,200,000 in cash and $150,000 in the company's bonds, payable a year later, were the steamers *Northern Light, Star of the West, Prometheus, Daniel Webster, Pacific, Lewis,* and *Brother Jonathan.* Beyond the capital payment, the amount of $180,706 for coal, coal storage facilities, and other fixtures was agreed to be paid to Vanderbilt from the firm's first-year earnings.

On February 14, 1853, Vanderbilt regained his visibility and was elected a director of Accessory Transit. Charles Morgan, another man with great experience in the operation of steamers, also took a seat on the board.

In the meantime Vanderbilt was preoccupied with the construction of America's ultimate personal luxury vessel of the era, the 270-foot, 2,500-ton *S.S. North Star.* The interior was fitted with every refinement possible and was decorated with walls of polished marble, paintings, and other accouterments. Vanderbilt and his friends left New York City aboard the *North Star* in May 1853, spent the summer in Europe, and returned on September 23. A stronger signal that Vanderbilt had "arrived" socially could not be imagined. In time, Vanderbilt and his kin would out-yacht, out-horse, and out-mansion just about everyone else in American society, at least on the East Coast.

Two days after Vanderbilt was elected to directorship in the Accessory Transit Company, a leased ship, the *S.S. Independence*, ran onto a rocky reef at Margarita on the coast of Baja California. The vessel caught fire, panic ensued, and about 200 of the 583 passengers lost their lives.

On April 9 of the same year, the Accessory Transit Company's *S.S. Lewis* was wrecked in the fog at Duckworth Reef about 18 miles north of the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Fortunately, no lives were lost, and the crew members and 886 passengers were returned to San Francisco safely aboard the coastwise *S.S. Goliah*, these in addition to 135 passengers already on board the ship.[4] For many observers the loss of the *Lewis* was good riddance, as this ship was

[1] Years later Baldwin became an admiral in the United States Navy.

[2] *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, p. 131. Also, David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, pp. 148-150.

[3] Heyl, p. 64; David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, pp. 43 f., the latter containing particularly extensive data, the source for much of the information used here.

[4] The 145-foot wooden sidewheel steamer *Goliah* was built in 1848 as a tug, but was later sent to California to do service on the Sacramento River,

particularly known for its unsanitary conditions, foul odors, and uncomfortable accommodations.[1]

The editor of the *Alta California* commented that on its fatal voyage the *S.S. Lewis* had nine feet of filthy water sloshing in her hold and that:[2]

> This loss may be considered as rather beneficial to the traveling public, as the *S.S. Lewis* could not be considered wholly seaworthy.

After the loss of the *S.S. Lewis,* the *S.S. Sierra Nevada* was added to the Nicaragua run, joining the *S.S. Pacific,* and the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in a season that saw record high bookings.[3] On February 15, 1853, the *Brother Jonathan* left San Francisco with 717 passengers aboard, quite possibly a record up to that time for the ship.

Among the captains of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on the Nicaragua route was Aaron M. Burns, who also served as captain of the *S.S. Pacific* from time to time. His intermittent service with the *Brother Jonathan* transcended several ownership changes and extended to 1861. Burns was born in Philadelphia of Quaker parents who had moved there from the South. His career at sea began in 1835 and continued until the War with Mexico in the mid-1840s. Soon thereafter he took the first small inland steamer up the Chagres River on the Atlantic side of Panama. In March 1849 he went to San Francisco and entered the coastwise trade to and from Central America.[4]

Vanderbilt Ousted

In the meantime, Cornelius K. Garrison, a man of long-standing experience in shipping, joined the Accessory Transit Company and was endorsed by Vanderbilt as the man who could capably manage the company's affairs in its Pacific Coast trade. While Commodore Vanderbilt and his entourage were in Europe via the elegant *S.S. North Star,* Morgan, Garrison, and other directors formulated a plan to oust him from Accessory Transit. On July 18, 1853, Morgan was elected president. Among his first actions was to charge Vanderbilt with failure to fulfill his obligations and to forthwith stop paying him the 20% royalty he had been due. In recognition of the new management, the company's name was changed to the Nicaragua Steamship Company. On the East Coast the company traded as the New York and California Steamship Line.

A miner in San Francisco in the early 1850s is shown at a ticket sales office. A small broadside on the post under his upraised arm advertises the *S.S. Cortes,* which ran to Panama. The typical passenger on this and other ships purchased the cheapest class of tickets and traveled in steerage. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

On the West Coast, the *S.S. Sierra Nevada,* owned by Charles Morgan, was leased to the line for 60% of the profits she earned, this ship replacing the wrecked *S.S. Independence.* The 1,800-ton *S.S. Cortes,* equipped with two steam engines instead of the usual single unit, was bought for $225,000 from the New York & San Francisco Steamship Line and replaced the wrecked *S.S. Lewis.* Economic times were good in California, and large numbers of passengers were carried throughout the year.

In the summer of 1853 the fare for first-cabin accommodations from San Francisco to New York City via the Nicaragua crossing was $300 for the sea portion, second cabin cost $200, and steerage $150. Land crossing was extra for all class levels.

Intense competition developed between the Nicaragua Steamship Company and the Pacific Mail Company, the latter servicing the connection across Panama. An advertising campaign in the San Francisco papers pointed out the faster transit via the Nicaragua crossing. To stimulate trade, in September 1853 the Nicaragua Steamship Company dropped its fares precipitously to $100 for first cabin, $75 for second cabin, and $50 for steerage, an action soon copied by Pacific Mail. However, these rates, obviously unprof-

there bearing the name *Defender.* In 1854 she was rebuilt and refitted and renamed *Goliah,* and used as a coastwise steamer. Her name is incorrectly spelled as *Goliath* in some accounts, a logical error. Years later she served as a tow boat in Puget Sound, and was dismantled in 1898 or 1899. The Lytle-Holdcamper list, p. 77, places the *Goliah* as a steamer of 333 tons built in New York in 1849. Among the passengers on the *S.S. Lewis* was William Tecumseh Sherman, he of later Civil War general fame (cf. *Personal Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman,* 1891, Vol. I, pp. 125-128).

[1] Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers,* Vol. 1, 1952, p. 407, furnishes an account of the negligent breakdown at sea of the steamer whose full name was *S.S. Samuel S. Lewis.*

[2] Issue of April 10, 1853, quoted by David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route,* 1972, pp. 46-47.

[3] Lytle-Holdcamper list, page 175, concerning the *Sierra Nevada:* 1,246 tons, built in 1852 in New York. First home port in New York; page 242: broken apart when stranded on October 17, 1869, at San Simeon Bay, CA, no lives lost. The *Sierra Nevada* will be encountered in the 1865 events surrounding the *Brother Jonathan.*

[4] Burns worked with the California Steam Navigation Co. until 1867. By the 1890s he was in the insurance business in San Francisco (cf. *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest,* pp. 131-132; includes portrait).

The country of Nicaragua, located to the north of Panama, offered a popular alternative land crossing for travelers by ship. On the eastern coast (Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean side) steamers landed at San Juan del Norte, shown near Grey Town at the lower right of the map. From that point, passage by steamship and portage was made up the San Juan River to the broad expanse of Lake Nicaragua. Crossing the lake by another steamship, passengers would complete the journey on the western or Pacific side by 12 miles across land, to San Juan del Sur (or Sud). At the latter port steamers were boarded for the trip north. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* regularly served the San Juan del Sud to San Francisco route in the mid-1850s. (Bancroft, *History of California*)

itable for each company, were abandoned in about a month, and the old tariffs were reapplied. Rates were later lowered, as competition increased. In March 1854 the fares from San Francisco to New York were $200, $175, and $60 for the various classes of service on the Nicaragua line. In June 1855 the tariffs were $175, $125, and $50 respectively.

The Nicaragua line sought to implement efficiencies on the Pacific route. The passage from San Francisco to San Juan del Sud averaged about 16 days, but could vary two or three days or so either way. Stops were made along the way at Acapulco and/or Realejo to reprovision the ships and add coal, while passengers enjoyed the shore amenities. Under a new arrangement, coaling was done at either end of the voyage–San Juan del Sud for departures there and San Francisco for southbound departures–shortening the time to about 11½ days. This increased reliability was a boon to passengers crossing at Nicaragua, as trips with connections on the eastern shore could be scheduled more closely.

Nicaragua transit from Pacific to Atlantic, west to east, involved about 189 miles,[1] as compared to about 50 for crossing farther south at Panama. The northern journey included traveling by road for about 12 miles inland on a macadam road, after which the trip included a voyage of about 19 hours across Lake Nicaragua, followed by a series of river steamer trips and portages on the eastern slope. The several boat changes, the trek around two areas of rapids, the train ride at another portage, and the 12-mile road trip provided travelers with little rest. Fortunately, there were several hotels along the way and many opportunities to drink, dine, and buy souvenirs.

The crossing of Nicaragua varied from 40 to 50 hours to

[1] The straight line distance is about 165 miles.

as quickly as 36, assuming there were no problems with the boats, portages, and other services. Sometimes, travel could take a week or more if conditions were not optimal (see Elisha S. Capron's account later in this chapter).

In August 1853 a record was set of 22 days and three hours from San Francisco across Nicaragua to New York City.[1] By way of comparison, this was about five times faster than the typical trip by clipper ship around Cape Horn.

In 1855, improvements were made to the river, lake, and land crossing facilities, new boats and coaches were placed in service, and the time to cross Nicaragua was reduced to slightly over 20 hours. The time needed for the trip from San Francisco to New York City fell to about 21 days.

Traffic on the Nicaragua Route

During the period 1853-1855, the route via Nicaragua proved to be a very attractive alternative to many travelers who wanted to take the fastest way from one coast of the United States to the other, as estimated passenger traffic figures from the Pacific Ocean across Central America to the Atlantic reveal. Although the Panama connection was more popular every year except one (1853), the Nicaragua connection captured a generous share of the market:[2] .

1849 Total passengers from San Francisco to Central America: 1,629. • Via Panama: 1,629. • Via Nicaragua: None.

1850: 7,770. • Via Panama: 7,770. • Via Nicaragua: None.

1851: 17,.855. • Via Panama: 14,189. • Via Nicaragua: 3,666.

1852: 18,397. • Via Panama: 11,845. • Via Nicaragua: 6,552

1853: 22,594. • Via Panama: 10,232. • Via Nicaragua: 12,362.[3]

1854: 21,269. • Via Panama: 10,808. • Via Nicaragua: 10,461.

1855: 18,982. • Via Panama: 10,367. • Via Nicaragua: 8,615.

1856: 19,515 • Via Panama: 12,245. • Via Nicaragua: 7,270.

1857: 13,182. • Via Panama: 11,627. • Via Nicaragua. 1,555

1858: 8,030. • Via Panama: 8,030. • Via Nicaragua: None.

A partial schedule of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan's* trips from San Francisco to San Juan del Sud on the west coast of Nicaragua and return shows the departure dates and the approximate number of passengers carried:[4]

1852, February 3: Departed from San Francisco

1852, October 5: Arrived in San Francisco; 288 passengers.

1852, November 1: Departed from San Francisco; 150 passengers.

1852, December 3: Arrived in San Francisco; 450 passengers

1853, January 1: Departed from San Francisco; 72 passengers.[6]

1853, February 2: Arrived in San Francisco, 450 passengers.

1853, February 15: Departed from San Francisco, 717 passengers (the most recorded in this direction).

1853, March 20: Arrived in San Francisco; 460 passengers

1853, April 16-17: Departed from San Francisco, 564 passengers.[8]

1853, May 21: Arrived in San Francisco; 461 passengers[9]

1853, June 1: Departed from San Francisco; 500 passengers

1853, July 2: Arrived in San Francisco; 409 passengers

1853, July 16: Departed from San Francisco; 290 passengers.[10]

1853, August 16: Arrived in San Francisco; 275 passengers.

1853, September 1: Departed from San Francisco; 260+ passengers.[11]

[1] David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, p. 50.

[2] David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, p. 163, the Panama figures having been adapted from Kemble (1943, pp. 253-254) and the Nicaragua numbers from contemporary San Francisco newspapers. Although the numbers have a ring of precision, in actuality nearly all passenger lists were approximate or incomplete, especially with regard to travelers who purchased tickets at the last minute on shore or after boarding, or who unofficially slipped cash to the officers. Folkman also gives figures for travel in the other direction, Atlantic to Pacific across Central America, not quoted here; the east-to-west numbers were usually considerably larger, representing immigration of individuals and families to California. For example, in 1853 there were 28,609 passengers westbound from New York City as compared to 22,524 eastbound from San Francisco. If westbound passengers departing New Orleans, Havana, and other ports were added, the number would increase.

[3] The only year in which the Nicaragua route was more popular.

[4] David I. Folkman, Jr., *The Nicaragua Route*, 1972, pp. 148-150, provided the basic listing; augmented with other citations as noted. The listing does not include all voyages of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* during this period.

[5] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, 1938, pp. 91-92. Passenger count not stated.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 110. Wiltsee noted that Captain C.H. Baldwin of the United States Navy was at the helm of the *Brother Jonathan*. On the same day the *Northerner* (Pacific Mail Steamship Co.) and the *Winfield Scott* (New York and San Francisco Steamship Line) left San Francisco headed south. • *Ibid.*, p. 323, reprinted an advertisement for the same voyage, noting it was to leave at 9 a.m. on January 1. The notice featured "The mail letter bag through ahead of the mails!" referring to the faster transit of letters via Nicaragua than by the regular United States mail that went through Panama; this gave rise to the hand-stamped envelope cachet, "VIA NICARAGUA AHEAD OF THE MAILS."

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 107. The arrival is given as a day later: "On March 21, 1853, the *Brother Jonathan* of 2,000 tons of the Vanderbilt Line arrived with 460 passengers and reported not one case of sickness on the trip. In the same paper it was announced that nine passengers had died on the steamship *Ohio* after crossing the Isthmus of Panama on her voyage to New York and had been buried either at sea or Kingston, Jamaica, her first port of call."

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 16, Reproduced is an advertisement from the *Alta California*, April 10, 1853, giving a slightly different planned departure date: "Nicaragua Steamship Company (Vanderbilt Line), shortest and quickest route, Only 12 miles land carriage. The splendid steamer BROTHER JONATHAN, 2,000 tons burden, C.H. Baldwin, Commander. Will leave Pacific Wharf on Saturday, April 15th, at 3 o'clock p.m.... For passage and freight of treasure apply to the office of the company, corner of Sacramento and Leidesdorff streets. C.K. Garrison, Agent. Card: The Accessory Transit Co. of Nicaragua, having purchased the entire interest of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Esq., in his Atlantic and Pacific steamers, known as the Vanderbilt Line, and the undersigned having been appointed to and assuming the general agency from San Francisco to New York and New Orleans hopes from his long experience in steam navigation to be enabled to place the line in a position to justify the patronage of the traveling public, shippers of treasure, &c. C.K. Garrison, Agent." Actually, the steamer left San Francisco on the 16th, but stayed in port to await necessary documents and did not depart San Francisco Bay until the 17th; the narrative of Franklin Langworthy, excerpted in the present text, gives details. The number of passengers stated by Langworthy is 564; published records state 500, apparently an approximation.

[9] Also see Elisha S. Capron's account of this voyage quoted below.

[10] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, 1938, p. 122, gave a roster of the vessels of the Nicaragua Steamship Company as advertised on July 15, 1853: Pacific leg: *Sierra Nevada, Cortes, Brother Jonathan*, and *Pacific*. Atlantic leg from Nicaragua to New York City: *Northern Light, Prometheus*, and *Star of the West*. Atlantic leg from Nicaragua to New Orleans: *Daniel Webster* and *Texas*.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 332. Mentions this voyage.

1853, October 2: Arrived in San Francisco; 348 passengers.

1853, December 31: Departed from San Francisco; 132 passengers.

1854, February 2: Arrived in San Francisco; 600 passengers.

1854, February 16: Departed from San Francisco; unknown number of passengers.

1854, March 26: Arrived in San Francisco; 696 passengers (the most recorded in this direction in the Folkman study).[1]

1854, May 16: Departed from San Francisco; unknown number of passengers.

1854, June 17: Arrived in San Francisco; 534 passengers.

1854, August 1: Departed from San Francisco; unknown number of passengers.

1854, August 30: Arrived in San Francisco; 400 passengers.

1856, March 5: Departed from San Francisco; 250 passengers.[2]

1856, April 10: Arrived in San Francisco; 300 passengers.

Meanwhile in the Vanderbilt Camp

When Commodore Vanderbilt returned from Europe on the *S.S. North Star* in September 1853, he learned that he had been ejected from the management of Accessory Transit. Forthwith, he vowed revenge, stating, "You have undertaken to cheat me. I will not sue you because the law takes too long. I will ruin you," in a message to Garrison and Morgan.[3] In February 1854 he set up the Independent Opposition Line, the *opposition* term being well-known to the public, an equivalent of what today might be called anti-monopoly. In many venues, if a steamship or ferry line had "opposition," it was apt to operate more inexpensively and on better schedules than if the route was under the control of just one company. Thus, the Independent Opposition Line title in itself was an advertisement that beckoned better service. Vanderbilt secured as a partner Edward Mills, the same man who had commissioned the building of the *Brother Jonathan* in 1850 and who was an old hand on the Atlantic route to Central America. On February 20 the erstwhile luxury steamer *North Star,* now converted to accommodate hundreds of paying passengers, departed New York City as Vanderbilt's first entry in the race to Panama.

Vanderbilt's competition played havoc with the profits of various competing lines, and on September 1, 1854 his estranged former partners and others faced reality. They answered a proposal by Vanderbilt and paid him $800,000 for his three ships, the *Uncle Sam, Yankee Blade,* and *North Star,* plus $100,000 for his promise never to engage further in the steamship trade from New York to California. Vanderbilt turned his attention to railroads which in due course added to his fortune immensely.

The Panama Railroad, slightly over 47 miles long, was completed on January 27, 1855, after which that crossing could be accomplished in a matter of *hours,* and with no changes. After this time, the Nicaragua option became less attractive to travelers.

Langworthy's Travels on the *Brother Jonathan*

This and the following narrative—the stories of Franklin Langworthy and Elisha S. Capron—furnish a first-hand view of life aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in 1853 when she was in service in the Pacific on the route from San Francisco to Nicaragua and return.

Franklin Langworthy went from the East to California via the overland route, stayed there for several years, and returned by sea, including a voyage aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* His experiences were chronicled in 1855 in a book titled *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains, and Mines: Or, A Diary Kept on the Overland Route to California, by Way of the Great Salt Lake: Travels in the cities, mines, and agricultural districts—embracing the return by the Pacific Ocean and Central America, in the years 1850, '51, '52, and '53.*

Selected excerpts follow from the last weeks of his California and travel experience. By this time he had been away from home for four years and was set to return to the East:[4]

March 25, 1853:

> Arrived in San Francisco, and put up at the Commercial Hotel to wait for a steamer to sail for San Juan del Sud. There are about an hundred boarders at the house, who, like myself, have started for home. The Commercial stands on Pacific Wharf. The boarders are from all parts of California. I have conversed with a great many of them, and their reports from all parts of the mining country are extremely discouraging. They affirm that miners have not, upon an average, made their board during the past winter. This goes to confirm what I have before stated as the result of my own observation....

April 16, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> At four o'clock, p.m., I went on board the steamship *Brother Jonathan,* bound for San Juan del Sud, in Central America.

[1] This arrival, date given as March 27, 1854, was mentioned in passing by Edward Rowe Snow in *Great Gales and Dire Disasters,* 1952, p. 165, with the passenger count stated as 1,100. This figure of 1,100 may have been picked up from Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific,* 1938, pp. 135-136, who noted this: "Another period of heavy immigration was in full swing. The *Brother Jonathan* arrived on March 27, 1854, with 1,100 passengers! It was remarkable how these high waves of travel and immigration would take place in this Pacific Coast travel. All steamers were running crowded to capacity, although there were three lines with larger boats than ever before. It was nothing unusual for 1,000 passengers or more to arrive on any of the steamers of any of the lines. The *Brother Jonathan* also brought news of a serious accident at Virgin Bay on Lake Nicaragua while the company was loading the passengers from the shore to the lake steamer *Central America,* in the large launch usually operated for that purpose [in which 19 were killed]."

[2] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific,* 1938, p. 195. For this trip passengers on the *Brother Jonathan* were charged $150 for first cabin accommodations and $75 steerage.

[3] This is probably the most quoted of the statements that Vanderbilt made in his lifetime. The most quoted comment of his son, William Henry Vanderbilt, was this, made to a newspaper reporter on October 2, 1882: "The public be damned."

[4] In a few instances Langworthy interleaved general observations with his daily narrative; these observations are included with the immediately preceding diary entries.

The number of passengers on board was 564. The main and promenade decks were crowded with this host of returning Californians, while thousands on thousands thronged the Pacific Wharf to witness our departure. The steam had been generating for two hours, hawsers were now unfastened and taken in, the ponderous wheels began to roll, and the stately ship shot into the Bay, amidst the shouts of the passengers, responsive to the cheers of thousands on the shore. After moving a short distance, the steamer gave her farewell salute from a piece of brass artillery. We now expected to proceed immediately to sea, but in this were disappointed.

The steamer moved majestically around a large circle in the Bay and came to anchor opposite the west end of the city, where we lay by until the next morning, waiting for her papers to be sent out from the shore. About sunset, the sky began to lower, and soon dark masses of clouds rolled up from the ocean. A storm of rain commenced, which continued through the night, accompanied by a gale of wind. But our ship remained at rest, being firmly held by a heavy anchor with a chain cable. This being the first voyage, in reference to most of us, we were glad that our ship lay by, greatly preferring a good harbor, to being tossed on the wide ocean in a dark and stormy night.[1]

April 17, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

At break of day, several small boats came out from the shore, the papers from the Custom House arrived, the steam was raised, the anchor weighed, the pilot on board, and about sunrise we moved down the Bay, and soon found ourselves passing through the Narrows which connect the Bay with the Pacific Ocean.

The entrance to the harbor is grand and beautiful. On the left hand is an amphitheater of hills, covered with verdure; on the right are six green promontories, or points of land, projecting from higher ground on that side. Around the entrance are numerous small islands, or rocks, lifting their moss-grown heads above the water, and beat by the eternal surges of an ocean ten thousand miles wide. San Francisco harbor is one of the finest in the world, being entirely land locked by surrounding hills and mountains, and of sufficient capacity to give shelter to all the fleets of the globe.

Immediately upon passing the Narrows, we found the sea in considerable commotion, having been raised in heavy swells by the wind during the past night. The ship began to pitch in such a manner that landsmen sailors like myself found it quite difficult to maintain our standing. The passengers began to be seized with seasickness, and in a few hours, hundreds were down, and the noise of vomiting resounded from all parts of the vessel. This seemed to be making a bad commencement to our voyage. As to myself, I was not much affected with this sickness. I had eaten sparingly for two days, and I now took to my berth, where I remained a large portion of the time for the next 24 hours.

Passing the Narrows, and over the bar without striking, the pilot was dismissed, and returned in his own boat. We were now beyond all the headlands and islands in the main ocean, whitened with foam, the ship being alternately lifted upon the summit of the swells and then plunged into the valleys between them. To witness the sublime movements of the ocean waters was to me a novel and interesting spectacle. The day wore slowly away, and the sun at length sank in a wide world of waters. The swells rather increased in size as night set in, and there was no abatement of sickness among the passengers. During the day the sea has several times broken over the bow, pouring a large body of water upon the main forward deck, and drenching a number of the steerage passengers. There was not the least apprehension of danger, and as to myself, I only slept the sounder, being rocked by the billows.

April 18, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

The swells begin to subside, the sickness to abate, and the ship plows her way through the waves, leaving behind a lengthy wake of white foam mingled with the deep green of the sea. We saw two whales at the distance of a mile, spouting and plunging among the waves. We also passed several shoals of porpoises. Their motions are peculiar; perpetually rising and falling, appearing and disappearing at short intervals.

At sunset, we are 30 miles from the coast, but birds are skimming the water around us. The weather is delightful, and in the evening, an unclouded moon pours her floods of silver light upon the vast expanse of the dancing, sparkling waters. Hundreds of gentlemen and ladies are walking the promenade deck, enjoying the splendid scenery of a moonlight night at sea. The passengers are becoming more lively, as the sea becomes more calm. At sunset, land is still visible at a great distance, and apparently but just rising from out the watery plain.

April 19, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A fog in the morning, which clears away about 10 o'clock, and the weather is pleasant as could be desired. The sails are set, and there is a light breeze just sufficient to fill the sails, which steadies the motion of the ship and adds a mere trifle to her velocity. The *Brother Jonathan* is 1,500 tons burthen, 240 feet in length, and has a single low-pressure engine of 400 horsepower. She has berths for 500 passengers. The saloon is below the main deck, towards the stern, and is about 80 feet in length by 20 feet in width, surrounded by state rooms having doors of panel work, ornamented with gildings. When fully illuminated in the evening with all its glittering ornaments, it might fairly vie in splendor with the drawing-room of an imperial palace. In this sumptuous apartment, tables are set, at which the cabin passengers take their meals. The viands are of corresponding richness and variety. The floor is covered with oil-cloth carpeting of bright and variegated colors. The seats consist of chairs and settees with crimson colors. Instead of the uncomfortable mode of voyaging in former times, the traveler can now sit, read, or write at his ease, living in a parlor, at the same time moving along the pathless deep at the rate of from two to three hundred miles per day. For these accommodations, we are indebted to the towering genius of Fulton.

To keep up the supply of fresh meat, we have on board eight or 10 beef cattle, a number of swine, besides a small lot of sheep. These are slaughtered when needed. We have plenty of potatoes, both sweet and of the common kind. Onions, lettuce, &c., fresh as if just brought from the garden. Fish, fresh and salt, crabs and lobsters, fresh veal and mutton preserved in cans, geese and ducks, and other fowls kept in ice, and dried fruits and nuts are on the table at every meal. The improved diet on board of modern ships has banished all fear

[1] Semi-irrelevant note: This might be one of the earliest "dark and stormy night" tales!

of the terrible scurvy, which in former years used to make such havoc among those who ventured to take long voyages. Thus, as the arts and sciences are cultivated, the happiness of mankind is advanced.[1]

April 20, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

The sea is almost as smooth as a millpond, and the ship, with steam, aided by a little wind, glides along with a steady, rapid motion. We have entirely lost sight of the land, and the sun rises from the water and sets in the same. We have now gained a distance of 700 miles from San Francisco, and are off the coast of Old California [Baja California], in Mexico.

April 21, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

The sun rises clear, and the coast of Old California is visible. By the aid of a spy-glass, I could discern the summits of three mountains of considerable elevation, standing a little back of the coast. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of paying a well merited compliment to Captain Baldwin and the officers of this ship.

Captain Baldwin is an officer in the United States Navy, a skillful navigator, and one who administers the government of the ship in a manner perfectly systematic, whilst his urbanity of manners gives entire satisfaction, both to the crew and all the passengers. It is necessary to particularize, for all the officers are vigilant in the performance of their various duties. In this ship there is one omission that I regret: there is no daily bulletin posted by the captain, giving our latitude and longitude, so that we cannot tell where we are, unless by inquiring of the captain.

Various expedients are resorted to by the passengers to "kill time" and "while away" the monotony of the hours. Many, before leaving San Francisco, provided themselves with packages of newspapers, and tales [novels]. With these they amuse themselves a part of the day. Others, by puffing segars, contrive to send off several hours each day in clouds of smoke. Others, again, assemble around the bar and indulge in a glass of cider, beer, wine, or brandy, cooled with a lump of ice. Here and there you see crowds collected, discussing grave political questions with considerable zeal, and some talent. The points most frequently debated in these juntas are free trade and abolitionism.[2]

But, if you take a look after supper into the grand saloon, you would soon be convinced that the company assembled there consisted of those who had been in California. You might there see scores of well dressed gentlemen and ladies seated at two long tables, and by listening a moment might hear certain expressions, which, however, are mere technical terms, and much better understood in California than in any other country; such for instance as "euchre," "right and left bower," and now and then, "high, low, jack, and the game." This jargon, although a very barbarous dialect, would enable you to guess the nature and importance of the business going on [card playing]. All this of course is mere amusement, and I know not of any gambling in the saloon, though I think there is enough of it done in the steerage.

The evening is fine. Light and fleecy clouds are moving along, through which the Queen of Night [the moon] shows her mild and cheerful countenance. There is something of a sea running, but as the ship plows the waves at right angles, there is but little rolling or plunging.

April 22, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

There was a fog during the latter part of the night, which lifted itself from the sea about sunrise, and we obtained a faint and indistinct view of the land, but lost sight of it an hour or two afterwards. I suppose we are a little north of Cape St. Lucas, the southern extremity of Old California. The weather is very clear, the wind brisk and fair, and the steamer plows the waves in magnificent style.

The first and second cabin passengers are furnished with "meal tickets." The first are white, and the second green. Those having the white tickets eat at the first table during one day, whilst those having the green take precedence the next. Thus the order of eating is alternately changed. The second cabin passengers fare as well as those belonging to the first, but are not like them, provided with state-rooms. That is all the distinction, but the difference in price is $75. Eating is the main business on board of a steamship, and to pass away time it is customary to sit long at the table.

By inquiry of the Captain, I learned that our place at noon is directly under the Tropic of Cancer, in 23 degrees 30 minutes north latitude, 80 miles in a westerly course from Cape St. Lucas. The weather is becoming very warm and the sea very smooth.

A little after sunset the full moon arose. The wind ceased, and there was a perfect calm. The air felt like the softest breath of summer, and a more delightful evening I never witnessed, either on land or water. I observe that the North Star is nightly sinking towards the level of the sea. In the mean times, the sun and moon have attained a higher elevation in the heavens, and when in their meridian, are almost directly over our heads. Thus we have daily and nightly proofs before us of the rotundity of our earth. We have tangible evidence also, that our world is a body of diminutive size. By counting the degrees of latitude and longitude between us and San Francisco, I find we have in six days traveled a twenty-third part of the distance around our globe. The foregoing facts are known theoretically by every person having a smattering of geography and astronomy, but their truth is more fully realized when thus reduced to practice, and confirmed by ocular demonstration.

I find that we have on board the ship a band of eight or 10 musicians, styled "Buckley's New Orleans Serenaders." They have various instruments, which they accompany with their voices. Their performance consists of Negro melodies and songs. Their imitations are perfect, and their exhibitions have attracted great crowds in all parts of California. I suppose they have made their "piles" and are now returning home. They have already given us one volunteer concert, and we expect they will entertain us with another.

April 23, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

The weather is pleasant, and still grows warmer. We are now passing across the Gulf of California, towards the Coast

[1] Langworthy's account for this day is the most specific encountered with regard to the quality of the ship's appointments and meal service after the 1852 refurbishing.

[2] In America in the early 1850s the two leading topics of the day were abolitionism, as discussed aboard the *Brother Jonathan*, and temperance, apparently was not discussed—at least not in the forums observed by Langworthy. Shipboard was hardly a place to debate the suppression of alcohol, so perhaps "free trade" took its place as a point of conversation.

of Mexico, distant in the direction we are proceeding, 400 miles. At noon, our latitude is 20 degrees 42 minutes north, and we are about 150 miles from land in any direction.

From the time we embarked until we crossed the Tropic of Cancer the weather was rather cool, but here the temperature seemed to change suddenly, and we found ourselves in a warm current of air, and we began to feel the climate of the torrid zone. The sails are now all furled, and we proceed by the aid of steam alone. The moon being near the full, the sea smooth, the company in high spirits, and by request of passengers, I gave a lecture on astronomy to a great crowd assembled on the promenade deck. The subject seemed to be suited to the occasion. Around us was the sublime spectacle of a boundless ocean, our canopy was the star-paved vault of heaven, and the pale, yet lovely Queen of Night in peerless majesty, presided over the scene. It was but natural under such circumstances, to extend our thoughts to that host of innumerable worlds, which were the only objects visible, except the little bark upon which we are floating along the bottomless abyss.

April 24, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Sunday. This morning I for the first time saw numerous flying fish flitting from the summit of one wave to another. The wind freshens, the sails are again set, and we rush through the briny flood with great velocity.

Bishop Ames, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, preached at half-past 10 o'clock in the morning. He gave an eloquent discourse upon the general effect produced in the world by the introduction of Christianity, such as ameliorating the miseries of war, diffusing a knowledge of the arts and sciences, liberalizing the civil governments of the world, &c. I think however, the Bishop gave credit to the Protestant Reformation for some improvements, the honor of which more properly belongs to the invention of the mariner's compass, the invention of printing, and the discovery of the true solar system, and the motion and figure of the Earth. When Christianity was introduced throughout the Roman Empire, and established by authority of the Emperor Constantine, then what little moral and intellectual light there was in the world was extinguished, the dark ages came on, and ignorance and superstition like a black impenetrable cloud, overspread all the Christian world. But when the art of printing and the compass were invented, and Copernicus proclaimed the true system of astronomy, the shadows began to break away. Had it not been for these inventions and discoveries, the nations would have remained in ignorance, notwithstanding the reformations of Luther and Calvin, and the thrones of all despotic might, for what we can see, have stood as firm as ever, and indeed, they stand even now in Protestant as well as in Greek and Catholic countries.

A ship under full sail going north is in sight at noon, the first we have seen upon this voyage. During the last 24 hours we have moved 197 English miles.

April 25, 1853, headed south aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan:*

The high mountainous coast of Mexico is in very plain sight, and distant only 10 or 15 miles. We can see a great extent of country. It appears like a vast amphitheatre, the most distant range towering high in the heavens.

The weather is like August in the States, and during the last night scores of passengers deserted their berths below and slept upon their blankets in the open air upon the promenade deck. There is scarcely a ripple upon the water. Looking over the bulwarks this morning, we perceived the sea crowded with countless millions of creatures of a light color, resembling worms three or four inches in length, and of the size of a man's finger, having large heads, somewhat after the fashion of wrigglers in stagnant fresh water. I think these animals are called squids. The ship plowed through this living mass for several miles. These creatures are the food of whales, and the places of their resort are termed by the sailors, "the whale's pastures."

I gave another lecture in the evening upon Sacred History. We had a large number of singers, whose melodious strains awoke the echoes of the still and listening deep. This ocean seems as far as our experience goes, quite worthy of its name "Pacific," that is, peaceful. Poets sing of the restless "billows," but here at present they seem to slumber in profound tranquillity. Our ship is kept in a state perfectly neat and clean. Every morning the carpeted rooms are all swept, after which the pump is set in motion, and floods of water poured over the decks, which are then scrubbed and swabbed. Thus, care is taken to preserve health on board.

Numerous flying fish are flitting about us. They appear to be about 12 inches in length and make use of their large fins for wings. Two whales showed themselves. One came quite near, and exhibited his huge length as he shot across the ship's foaming path, about 80 rods astern.

Latitude 17 degrees 16 minutes north. Quite an excitement on board at three o'clock p.m., and the passengers are all on deck with glasses and eyes looking ahead at a splendid steamship, the *Cortes,* which is rapidly nearing us in majestic style. The white foam dashes from her prow. When within half a mile, our wheels were stopped, and as the *Cortes* came abreast of us, we ran up our colors and saluted them with a discharge of artillery. They returned the compliment, and also stopped their wheels. A boat was sent to her from our ship to exchange letters and newspapers.

There seemed to be an immense multitude of people on board the *Cortes.* Some judged the number at one thousand, bound to the gold region. They will soon learn that "all is not gold that shines," and that distance lent an enchantment to the scene, which a nearer view will dissipate. In a few minutes, both ships were under way again, and we soon lost sight of the beautiful *Cortes,* she appearing to sink beneath the unruffled surface of the sea. We were at this time only eight or 10 miles from the mountainous coast.

An hour after this, and another ship hove in sight. She was soon abreast of us, and passed without stopping. She proved to be the Steamship *Panama* from Panama. Her decks were covered with a dense throng of gold seekers. We raised our ensign and saluted with a gun, and the passengers on both ships saluted each other with loud and reiterated cheers. These incidents served to enliven us a little, and break for the moment the dull monotony of the voyage.

We are now so near the coast that we can see with the naked eye the rock-bound shore and the precipices on the sides of the mountains. The land scenery along here is truly sublime. Successive chains of mountains rise behind each other, presenting a great number of sharp peaks and conical summits, their forms denoting their volcanic character. After dark, the lurid fires of volcanoes were seen gleaming through the dusky atmosphere. I tried to do my part towards entertaining the passengers, and in the evening I gave a lecture upon the scenery of Salt Lake Valley and an exposition of Mormonism.

April 26, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

We had great sport this morning in looking at an immense shoal of skipjack fish. The water seemed alive with them for the space of a square league.[1] They appeared to be two or three feet in length, and were perpetually leaping entirely out of the water. Hundreds were in the air at a time. Some were so active, and came up with such an impetus, as to shoot up to the height of eight or 10 feet above the surface, when turning a graceful curve, would plunge in again.

At 10 in the morning, neared the coast, and perceived numerous small islands stretching along the shore.

North latitude at noon, 15 degrees 20 minutes and west longitude 97 degrees 28 minutes. We have passed Acapulco, and I regret that our ship did not touch at that old Spanish city. It is said to be a very interesting place. The harbor is entered by a deep and narrow channel which expands into a large circular bay surrounded by mountains. Here we might have seen the orange groves and other fruit-bearing trees of the torrid zone. In the regions around Acapulco are numerous volcanoes, and the place has sometimes been desolated by earthquakes. A few years since there happened a tremendous earthquake, the effects of which are still visible on all sides. Such was the violence of the shock, and the commotion of the sea, that ships were thrown entirely out of the water and now lie rotting far up the sides of the hills.

The moon rises late this evening, which enables me for the first time to observe a phenomenon generally seen at sea. The foaming tide occasioned by the wheels and wake of the ship seemed perfectly illuminated by means of what appeared like coals of fire, or sparkling diamonds. These fiery appearances are doubtless of a phosphorescent nature. This evening we can see the dark red fires of a volcano. I gave another lecture, the subject being the comets, and the planet Saturn with his satellites and rings.

April 27, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

At break of day, a long black cloud hung over the Gulf of Tehuantepec, which we are now crossing. There were frequent gleams of lightning which seemed to lift up the lower margin of the cloud, giving a distinct view of a broad expanse of the ocean. By the mighty power of steam, we are able almost to outstrip the speed of the storm. A shower threatened to fall on us this morning, which would doubtless have occurred, had not the ship, while the cloud was slowly rising, moved many miles ahead, by which means we seemed to pass by the southern end of the shower. No land in sight.

North latitude at noon, 14 degrees, 16 minutes. The sun is now directly overhead and pours his vertical beams upon us with great power. The sea-water is very warm, so also is the fresh water kept in large iron tanks on board the ship. Cabin passengers are allowed ice water to drink, an accommodation in which those in the steerage do not participate.

Many whales are plunging around and playing their mighty gambols. I gave a lecture in the evening upon the subject of the fixed stars and nebular system, demonstrating by analogical reasoning the very probable fact that there is a grand center of motion and gravity to the material universe; this center consisting of a vast body of matter, superior in heft to the millions of suns, and hundreds of millions of worlds, which compose Jehovah's Empire, of which this mighty center is the capital.

Central American Republic (today's Costa Rica) eight escudos gold "doubloon" minted in 1828. Shown on the obverse are cone-shaped volcanoes such as Langworthy described in 1853. (Guia Collection)

April 28, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

We have crossed the Gulf of Tehuantepec 300 miles broad, and at sunrise are within 20 or 30 miles of Central America. It presents the most splendid piece of mountain scenery we have witnessed upon this voyage. To the north-east, we have a distinct view of 16 immense volcanic summits lifting their pointed summits high above the clouds, all of them being as to shape, beautiful and regular cones. They are volcanoes, or of volcanic origin, but not at present in a state of eruption.

North latitude, 13 degrees 22 minutes. Lost sight of land in the afternoon. Appearance of the coast-rainbow.

April 29, 1853, headed south aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A brisk breeze, the sails are all set, and we plunge through the waves with a regular and steady motion. At sunrise, a long line of the coast of Central America hove in sight, and I counted 20 volcanic peaks at a single observation. The passengers are in high spirits, as we expect to reach our port in the course of the day. We have had an unusually pleasant voyage, but a trifling amount of sickness, and but one serious accident has occurred; a man was badly hurt by falling down the forward cabin stairs.

The breeze freshens and the sea is covered with foam, but the swells are short and do not much impede the motion of the ship. The log has just been thrown, and our velocity is 11 English miles per hour.

At 12 o'clock at noon, we are abreast of two immense volcanic mountains which seem to rise from an elevated plain or table land, as level as a planed board. Further south, no mountains are visible, and the coast looks low and flat. A little further on in the same direction, the country for 20 miles or so rises into a high smooth swell, rounding over from north to south. At the southern terminus of this swell is a large volcanic mountain, the summit of which is flattened.

This forenoon a sea turtle swam past near the ship. The weather is intensely hot, and the beams of a vertical sun are reflected from the deck covered with oil-cloth like blasts from the mouth of a furnace. It would scarce be supportable were it not for the strong breeze. We passed through another shoal of porpoises. They appear to be a fish six or eight feet in length and are perpetually leaping from the water. When they appear

[1] An area three miles on a side, or nine square miles.

as on this occasion, in vast numbers, their gambols are quite amusing.

This afternoon we move 60 or 70 miles along the coast, so near to it that the groves appear very distinctly. It is a timbered country, and we see no signs of inhabitants. There seems to be a range of hills not far from the shore, while far back in the interior, we see the summits of three volcanoes with peaks concealed by clouds of smoke. The shore itself consists of perpendicular rocks, against which the surf rolls with great violence. While viewing these interesting objects, as if to add to the sublimity of the scene a resplendent rainbow suddenly spanned the heavens over, the ends resting on the foaming water, while our ship was moving directly towards the centre of the arch. It was a triumphal arch, greatly surpassing in brilliancy and grandeur the proudest that mortal hands have ever erected in honor of conquerors or kings. For the first time, we now see the land directly ahead. This is a clear indication that we are near the end of the voyage.

All the passengers are hurrying to and fro, picking up their goods and arranging their baggage preparatory to landing. The passengers have tendered a vote of thanks to Captain Baldwin and the officers and crew of the *Brother Jonathan* for the polite attention they have paid to our wants, and the consummate skill they have evinced in managing all the concerns of the ship. The sun is about one hour high, the town is in sight, and the bustle on board is rapidly increasing. About sunset we entered the harbor, passing near a United States war ship lying at anchor. The wheels stopped, and soon we heard the heavy plunge of the anchor, and we were safely moored within 80 rods (about a quarter of a mile) of the town. I cast my eyes about to take a hasty glance at the surrounding prospect

After arriving in port, the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* remained at anchor while her crew took shore leave. The ship was cleaned (more or less) and reprovisioned for the return trip north to San Francisco. On May 8, 1853, the ship weighed anchor and steamed toward San Francisco. Among the passengers was an eastern attorney, whose story follows.

A Voyage to Nicaragua in 1853

The second narrative detailing accommodations aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* on the Pacific Coast route in the early 1850s is provided by the journal of Elisha S. Capron. As a prelude, the first leg of Capron's trip, in the Atlantic Ocean, from New York City to San Juan del Norte in Nicaragua, is discussed, followed by journal entries of his voyage on the *Brother Jonathan* in the Pacific.

On April 20, 1853, at 2:00 in the afternoon, attorney Capron left New York City on the S.S. *Prometheus*, Captain Churchill at the helm, and headed for Nicaragua.[1] At the time "once in every 15 days, two steamers leave the port of New York for California, carrying out from four to nine hundred passengers," he wrote in an account of the trip.

On this particular journey Capron's objectives were:

1st, to secure commercial claims held by houses in New York against various individuals located in different sections of California; and,

2nd, to gain information respecting all parts of the state, so that merchants at the east might learn the condition of trade here, the extent of the market, the kinds of goods marketable, the resources of the state, its agricultural, mineral, and commercial prospects, &c., &c.

In rough waves all but the most seasoned travelers were apt to become seasick, as depicted on this coastwise steamer. (*Beyond the Mississippi*)

Aboard the *Prometheus* were 470 passengers as the ship left New York City on April 20, 1853, a cloudy, dark day which seemed to dampen the spirits of the well-wishers who attended the send-off at the dock. The mood was somber and businesslike, lacking the usual shouts and "loud, long, spirit-stirring cheers." Capron thought that this was quite unlike what he expected, and for a short time he was "disturbed...with unpleasant apprehensions."

However, such thoughts were soon forgotten as Capron settled into his stateroom shared with two strangers, father and son, from Rhode Island. Fortune smiled on him, as he found his two roommates to be "full of life, fun and frolic, social and intelligent." All went well until rough seas were encountered. The waves not high enough to bother seasoned travelers, but they were sufficient to make Capron and the other "freshmen" aboard quite seasick.

After Capron was feeling better, he explored the ship. The *Prometheus* accommodated three classes of passengers. First class, of which he was a part, offered access to all parts of the ship and the opportunity to fraternize with the ship's officers. Further:

[1] His experiences were subsequently recorded in *History of California, from Its Discovery to the Present Time;* [and with the lengthy subtitles and sub-subtitles popular during the era, continuing with] *Comprising Also a full Description of Its Climate, Surface, Soil, Rivers, Towns, Beasts, Birds, Fishes, State of Its Society, Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Mining, &c. with A Journal of the Voyage from New York, via Nicaragua, to San Francisco, and Back, via Panama.* Being at once an attorney, a writer, and a traveler with an investigative mind, Capron delivered an account filled with much important information and many facts. Subsequent quotations in the present text relative to his journey are from his book. • The *Prometheus*, 1,207 tons, was launched in New York in 1850 and remained in service under American ownership until 1857, when she was sold.

With respect to the first and second classes, their accommodations are as comfortable as they can be on ship-board. The state rooms and cabins are clean and well provided; and the arrangements and supply of the table are quite equal to those of any of our best hotels.... The lady passengers are well attended by waiting-maids, who cheerfully give every attention and assistance necessary to render a sea voyage comfortable and pleasant.

However, third class was a different story entirely:

The third class are the steerage passengers. These are generally the majority, and are confined to the steerage and forecastle. I am compelled to record the fact that their accommodations are not comfortable. Many are poor, and some, I regret to say, are not inclined to be cleanly.... The steerage of any ship is a terrible place, as now constructed, ventilated, and provided.... It is situated in the very bottom of the vessel, a damp, dark, poorly ventilated hole.[1]

Capron commented that the wretched conditions in steerage were not the fault of the officers: "They have nothing to do with the sale of tickets of admission for the voyage. They receive all who present tickets, and give them the places indicated."[2]

Additional remarks included descriptions of certain fellow travelers:

[Most of the] ladies are adventurers, full of hope and animation. One of them, more especially, cannot fail of success in the Pacific state. She is about 40, strong, healthy, unmarried, drinks champagne at her dinner with the gusto and smack of a connoisseur, plays a crack game of cards, dances gracefully, talks politics and pistols with the gentlemen, and smokes! Now there's a woman for you! Think of a state populated with the descendants of such mothers!

The *S.S. Prometheus* continued its downward journey, entering the Gulf Stream, which:

is distinguished from the ocean generally by the peculiar grass that is always found floating in it in large quantities.... It is said that the water of this stream is warmer than the main ocean, is relatively higher, and has a more rapid current.

We have seen but four vessels since we left port [five days ago]. The finny natives of the great deep, also, have been remarkably coy; only one, a huge porpoise, having condescended to give us a full view of his fishship. The sailors tell me that all fish avoid the Gulf Stream, from a dislike to the temperature of the water....

The voyager will admire the order and system which prevail among the officers and crew of the steamer. The government has its judicial, administrative, and financial departments, each distinct, but all subject to the captain, who is absolute sovereign. The common sailors are under the immediate direction of the first and second mates. The latter are a kind of lieutenant governors, and take the captain's command in their order if he be absent or incapacitated. The captain holds them responsible for any disorder among the sailors, and gives no personal attention to the latter. The engineers have the control of the engine, the speed of the vessel, and of all the firemen. The captain looks only to the engineers. The purser is the treasurer, receives and disburses all the moneys, provides the supplies, and keeps the accounts and "reckoning" of the ship.

The steward is head of the larder, and chief lord of the kitchen and dining saloon. All the cooks and table waiters are his subjects. The passengers regard this official with peculiar interest; and he and his *troupe* regard the passengers precisely according to the length of their purse strings, and the kind of knot into which they are twisted. They all have a strong dislike to the hard knot, but smile complaisantly at the bow knot, which is easily untied. When difficulty arises here, the steward is amenable to the captain.

The watch is a very important and responsible department, and is under the direction of the mates—the deck officers. The 24 hours are divided into a certain number of "watches." The division is not the same on all vessels, nor is it always alike on the same vessel, being regulated by circumstances. There is the "fire watch" and the "deck watch." The sailors comprise the latter, the firemen the former. On sail vessels no "fire watch" is needed. The mates answer for all delinquencies in the important duties of the "watch." Four are always on duty at the same time on the *Prometheus*. In sailor phrase, "they are four on and four off." The table waiters and chamber maids keep the state rooms and saloons in order, and perform the duties of house servants generally for the passengers.

As the days wore on, Elisha S. Capron noted other shipboard traditions as well as particular occurrences. "A steerage passenger climbed into the rigging—a violation of a law of the ship." Two sailors endeavored to tie him up as punishment, and after a short struggle did so. Later, the passenger was freed, and after that time he behaved properly. In another instance a young Irish lad was found to be a stowaway. He was immediately "employed in deck service to pay his passage."

This was also told:

This evening [April 28] we are startled by the rumor that several pickpockets and robbers are on board the ship. I learn they have been suspected, and closely watched, during the voyage, but no certain proof appeared until today. The captain is catechizing them very minutely. They are everywhere present, but not long in any place, consulting together, looking into the state rooms, even those of the ladies, the first to be up in the morning, and the last to be in bed at night. One of them says he is a doctor, the other, that he is a schoolmaster. The doctor, we presume, administers bullets and bowie knives, and the schoolmaster teaches state prison sciences. They are, however, powerless now. The captain told them tonight that he would put them in irons before the vessel gets in port.... She was 1,662 [miles], by her log, from New York.

On April 30, the S.S. *Prometheus* dropped anchor at the mouth of the San Juan River in Nicaragua, in company with the S.S. *Daniel Webster*, which came in from New Orleans. The journey of the *Prometheus* was computed at 2,097 miles accomplished in nine and one half days of travel.

[1] Capron went on to state that he had seen steerage accommodations in other vessels, namely the S.S. *Illinois* and S.S. *Georgia*, "both of which are inferior to that of the *Prometheus*."

[2] Capron's commentary is quite relevant to the analysis of the dozens of accounts written by travelers on steamers to and from California. It is quite apparent that two travelers on the same ship, in different classes of accommodations, could have two completely different experiences, with opinions of the ship's cleanliness, etc.

After various delays and discomforts in the land crossing at Nicaragua, Elisha S. Capron arrived on May 7th on the Pacific Coast at San Juan del Sud, a town of about 30 buildings and 200 inhabitants. During the next 24 hours, other travelers completed the inland journey and joined him to begin the voyage via steamer to the north.

Aboard the *Brother Jonathan*

Elisha S. Capron's *S.S. Brother Jonathan* narrative begins on Sunday morning. He and his fellow travelers are on shore awaiting the readiness of the ship to take them to San Francisco:

May 8, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> At 10 o'clock the boom of a cannon on board the *Brother Jonathan* (Captain Baldwin commander), which lies far out in the bay, announced that her decks were ready to receive her burthen. The small boats, manned with natives and sailors, were put in motion to convey the passengers and baggage on board. The steamship company is probably too poor to build a berth either here or at Virgin Bay. Those who are too timorous to wade three rods to the small boats, in water perhaps three inches deep, are carried on the backs of natives for two bits, or 20 cents [*sic*]. Ladies should be carried, but I must confess that a man weighing, perhaps, 200 pounds, astride the neck of a native of not half that solidity, is in my eyes a laughable sight... Taking advantage of the receding surf, I walked safely to the small boat on the clean white sand, wetting only the soles of my boots. The "go-aheaders" waded far out into the surf, and so great was their anxiety to reach the steamer that the lives of all were put in jeopardy by overcrowding and thus upsetting the treacherous boats.
>
> Travelers must procure the conveyance of their property to the beach from the Transit Company's storehouse, where it is delivered to the owner on the receipt of a check. The distance is about 20 rods, and the cost "two bits" for each article. From the beach it is conveyed on board the steamer by the Company. The labor of selecting your own from the great mass of luggage with which it is mixed, and getting it upon the beach, requires your personal attention and vigilant watchfulness. The embarkation is tiresome, expensive, and dangerous.
>
> At one o'clock p.m. all was ready, the cannon boomed again, the huge iron wheels began to revolve. The steamer moved from her moorings to her course of N.W. half W., and in a few minutes San Juan del Sud was but a dusky speck upon the surface of the ocean.
>
> Now we are out to sea, and the same scene is commenced on shipboard that I witnessed on the *Prometheus*. The purser is assigning state rooms and table seats to passengers, and the deck hands are arranging and stowing away luggage. The ship's order is the same, substantially, as that of the *Prometheus*, but the *Brother Jonathan* is much the larger vessel.
>
> We are now in sight of the western shore of this continent. It presents a broken range of mountains of considerable elevation, with no perceptible level between them and the water. In the interior more lofty mountains are seen, the tops of some of which are lost in the clouds....
>
> It is now evening. Confusion and excitement have ruled the day. But I am soon to [illegible] for the first time since I left Greytown [also spelled Graytown, on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua], and lay my head on a clean pillow for repose. As I look at the middle berth in state room "J," assigned to me, I long to stretch my weary limbs upon it. It is on the starboard side of the ship, abaft the wheel, and as the breezes here come from the land, they must always give me a call.

May 9, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> "The sleep of the laboring man is sweet," and so was mine during the last night. Refreshed and thankful, I left my pillow at five o'clock. The weather was clear and the ocean calm; but about midnight the wind blew violently, the waves ran high, and the old vessel rocked like a cradle. A man sleeping out on the deck barely escaped, by the aid of a fellow traveler, a briny bath over the side of the steamer.
>
> We are in the broad blue ocean, no land in sight, and we are making good progress. Thousands of blackfish surround the vessel. They are close under her sides and distinctly visible. Occasionally, they show 10 feet or more out of the water. They resemble the porpoise in figure and color, and the largest is about 15 feet in length.
>
> A swine has just escaped from the pen and jumped overboard. Away it swims in the track of the ship, and it is impossible to recover the rash porker. It sinks and rises with the swells, and its legs are flying like the paddlewheels of a steamboat....
>
> One of the steerage passengers cannot be found. Search is made in all parts of the vessel. He was not missed until today at dinner. None of his companions have seen him since last evening. He has probably fallen overboard. The presumption is that he came on deck in the night and, either by accident or with the intention of destroying himself, stepped over the side of the ship.... This event occupied the attention of the company for an hour; many surmises were expressed, many regrets; but now it is not mentioned; the children are sporting on the decks, some of the passengers are gaming, others reading, and I am writing up my journal....
>
> "A whale! A whale!" resounds from a dozen voices on the starboard. Yes, at the distance of about two miles I see the monster. Now he throws up a large volume of water to a great height. While it spreads and falls, he dives, and in going down, shows about 20 feet in length from his tail. He remains below a few minutes, and again performs the same evolutions, slightly changing his place. With the whale scene the day closes. The ship at noon had made 176 miles from our port of departure. An accident happened to her larboard [port or left side, opposite of *starboard*] wheel about mid-day, but it was soon repaired, and she is now under headway with a fair wind and the prospect of a blow during the night.

May 10, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> I was out at five o'clock. The sky is overcast, but the ocean has resumed its calm, smooth surface. The steamer is yet on her course of W.N.W. half W. About 10 o'clock last night the wind breezed up from the west and for about two hours was high and strong. It rained copiously, and the swells ran high. I observed that the motion of the ship was steadier than it is in a calm. She varied not her course, as I could discover, a hair's breadth.
>
> Just before the rain our state room received a visit from the "schoolmaster" who gave us lessons on the *Prometheus*. I knew him [from his appearance]. He very coolly examined my pockets, which fortunately contained nothing of value. While he was thus employed, one of my roommates discovered him and

made a noise, upon which our instructor seated himself on the door sill. My companion, supposing the person he saw was myself, gave no further attention, but when the visitor took his seat, the former called to me, and receiving no answer from by berth, began to suspect that all was not right, and cried, "Who's there?" The dignitary said, "I didn't know as this was a state room. I am sitting here to enjoy the breeze." The reply was manifestly false, for we had seen his proceedings among my clothes. On being interrogated whether he found the breeze in my pockets, he *vamoosed*, leaving us to our dreams....

No land is in sight, nor have we descried a sail since we left port. We are approaching the locality known by seamen as the Pacific whaling ground, but at this time nothing is visible but the monotonous scene of sky, water, and vessel.... The steamer at noon has made 222 miles, thus bringing us 398 from San Juan del Sud.

May 11, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A bright and lovely morning.... The surface of the ocean is smooth, and young whales, porpoises, and blackfish are keeping us merry company. The last night was stormy, the rain descended in torrents, the wind was high, fitful and blustering. I was awakened during the conspiracy of the elements to disturb my slumbers, by the spray they cast upon me through window and door....

The tables of this steamer are better supplied than were those of the *Prometheus*. The variety of dishes is greater. The beeves and other stock are taken on board alive and slaughtered on the way when animal food is wanted.

May 12, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Another bright morning dawns to delight the hearts of the weary voyagers on the *Brother Jonathan*. Here we are: no land in sight; no sail, or whale, nor even a bird. Our course is yet W.N.W. half W. The steamer is thus put "out to sea" to avoid the breakers which surround Cape St. Lucas, the southern extremity of the promontory of California. We are now off Acapulco, in Mexico.... The American mail steamers[1] and many other vessels touch here to "coal and wood," get fresh water, and other supplies....

The last day's distance made by the steamer is 236 miles. She is, therefore, 874 from her last port.

May 13, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

Left my pillow this morning at five o'clock. What a cerulean sky and brilliant sun! Not a cloud, even as big as a man's hand, is to be seen. How inimitably the horizon blends in the misty distance with the deep blue surface of the ocean! And such a surface! So calm and smooth! Not a zephyr presumes to ruffle it! So broad, and pure, and bright! It looks a celestial mirror, radiant with reflections from a brighter world....

This has been a very still, very uninteresting day on board. The heat has been oppressive, and the passengers have generally kept their beds or lounged lazily around the decks.... The ship has made but 212 miles, putting us 1,086 miles from "the Sud."

May 14, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

O fickle, fickle ocean! When last I bade thee good-night, thy face was like Beauty's. Not a line of disquiet was on it, not a breath disturbed its repose.... The morning has appeared, but where are thy evening charms? We have arrived within the influence of the blows and rough seas which are so common in the Gulf of California.... The swells roll heavily. But few of the passengers are able to stand on their feet and all are drooping.... [Seasickness prevails among the passengers including the writer.] At noon the ship had made but 186 miles in the preceding nautical day. We are therefore 1,272 miles from our last port of departure. My head is dizzy, my hand trembles, my stomach fails, I am done!

May 15, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

The ocean is yet rough, but its violence is spent.... I am seasick. That one word contains a long chapter, and I will lay my journal aside for the day, merely remarking that the wind is from the northwest. We are crossing the Gulf of California and expect to be off Cape St. Lucas by three o'clock, after which we hope for a calmer sea.

Seven o'clock p.m. We have now passed the cape and are again on the broad ocean. We begin to feel a sensible change in the weather. On no day of the voyage, at this hour, has it been so cool. We shall see no more very warm days. The temperature is at this moment 12 degrees lower than that of noon. Our seasickness is passing away....

May 16, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A bracing morning. The surface rough, the sky clear, the wind northwest. Land in plain sight, at the distance of about six miles. It is a long, continuous bank of yellow sand, but not the *golden* sand.... It is the western shore of the promontory of California....

Ahead, and more clearly visible, is one of the islands of Margarita, lying near to the mainland.... The southern extremity is a bold and lofty mountain, stretching far off to the west, until it sinks down and is lost in the bosom of the ocean.... Upon nearer sight, the formation of the island is easily apparent. It is undoubtedly volcanic, and now exhibits nothing but dry, barren masses of yellow clay and coarse rocks. It has no springs and is inhospitable. It sustains no vegetation. The white surf is dashing wildly upon its shore. About two months ago, on the western part of this island, the ill fated steamship *Independence* was wrecked. The ship being old, many people believed at first that it was intentionally run onto the rocks, to enable the owners to collect the amount of insurance which had been taken upon her; but Captain Baldwin discredits the story. He says the commander did not deviate from the ordinary track, but misjudged as to his distance from the rock, which is discoverable at low tide but is flooded at high water.

The accident occurred about five o'clock in the morning; the weather was hazy, and it was the commander's first trip. He designed to pass the rock a mile off, but mistook his position. The ship struck, and was run in shore as far as possible in the hope of saving the lives of the passengers, but she took fire, and by the double calamity about 120 lives were lost. The *Brother Jonathan* was run close in, that we might see the wreck and rock.

The island is just fading from view. It appears to be either a chain of barren rocks and clay about 20 miles in length, or one connected mass running down at several points to the

[1] Especially steamers on the *Panama* route.

surface of the water. A cousin of mine, by marriage, was on board the lost ship, but I have not learned his fate. His residence is in Ohio, and he went to California as an adventurer. He left a pleasant home, a competence, and a lovely family.

The ship today has made 203 miles. We are, therefore, 1,675 miles from San Juan del Sud.

May 17, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A bright morning. The ship is yet on her course of W.N.W. half W., and is a long distance from land. We have again a real Pacific surface—smooth and glassy with a gentle, heavy, rolling motion. A whale! A whale! Yes, there *is* a whale! A real monster, over our starboard bow!

Last night, for the first time since I left New York, bed covering was necessary. I have put on my flannels.... The ladies appear in warm dresses, and we have a season of general rejoicing. The breakfast table presented agreeable evidences of the happy change, the butter being no longer a yellow oil, but having a very natural consistence....

Whales! Whales! Whales!...

We have this day made 215 miles and are now 1,890 miles from San Juan del Sud.

May 18, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A cloudy, misty morning, with a cool atmosphere, but with very unpleasant swells. The course of the ship is northwest, the breeze from the west. The sailors are hoisting canvas to give the impetus of the winds to our speed. The passengers have greatly abated in vivacity and activity; the fall of the mercury having produced a corresponding depression of animal spirits. The gentlemen wrapped in overcoats and the ladies in shawls are seated before the doors of their state rooms, employed in efforts to be social. A fire would be very agreeable; it is almost necessary. This is the first time that whales have been numerous. They are spouting and diving in every direction. Many of them are small, but several are very large. They appear like families that are abroad to take the fresh morning air, or they may have come out to pay their respects to the steamer whose majestic stride through their native fields cannot but attract their attention.

I have but now been viewing with admiration the track of the steamer. It is about 80 feet wide, and in close connection with the steamer can be quite beautiful. It presents three distinct colors, [illegible] and constantly changing positions, proportions and lines. The ground is deep blue, richly streaked and spotted with a light, bright green. Over the whole there is a delicate, pearly-white froth, or frostwork. Occasionally, the rays of the sun striking upon them burnish all these colors, and tip the white edges of the frostwork with sparkling spangles. Nature is truly a perfect painter, and she has the [illegible] in her power to invest the touches of her pencil with motion and endless variety. This gorgeous accompaniment is the production of the paddlewheels and motion of the steamer.

The steamer has made 220 miles. We are therefore 2,110 miles from our last port of departure.

May 19, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

"[illegible]." The last night was dark and gloomy.... We are not far from shore, hence the night fogs. The mail steamer *John L. Stephens*, from San Francisco at noon on Monday last, passed us outside at seven o'clock this morning, bound to Panama. She gave us a fine idea of our own appearance on our upward way. Under the power of steam, no canvas spread to aid her, regardless of wind and wave, she flew by us like an ocean bird. Her foaming track, straight as the arrow from an Indian's bow, was plainly visible upon the water for a long distance behind her; and the dense smoke from her lofty chimney trailed in graceful undulations far away in her rear, until, expanding in the air, it rested against the sky, a white and shining cloud....

The beautiful island of St. Clemente, or St. Salvador, is just appearing over our larboard. I say beautiful island, because it rises fair and graceful out of the ocean, and stands so lofty and relieved against the sky.... Our track is between it and Santa Catalina, an island lying several miles to the east, but not in view....

A faint blue outline of Santa Catalina may now been seen over our starboard. It is an island similar in formation to St. Clemente, but more fertile. They are both volcanic elevations. Catalina is the higher and larger. The latter, I am told, is inhabited by a few families of Spanish origin; and cattle and some other stock are pastured in its grass fields.... I am informed that the whitish spots appearing on the sides of the mountains are bird-lime, or a species of guano, that the birds are the fabled albatross, and they will follow vessels for days in succession, especially in stormy weather. There are two smaller islands lying contiguous to these, and they are known as the Santa Barbara and St. Nicholas isles.

The steamer at mid-day had made 240 miles, and we are thus 2,350 miles from our Pacific port of departure....

We just passed the little isle of Santa Barbara over our larboard, just at nightfall. It is similar in formation to the others.

May 20, 1853, headed north aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

A glorious morning! The surface of the water smooth and bright. Scarcely the ruffle of a zephyr is seen. The *Brother Jonathan*, headed N.W. by N., has both eyes[1] eagerly set on San Francisco, distant about 20 hours' sail.

The mail steamer *Northerner*, from Panama, is in sight, and we are both pressing ahead in a trivial effort to arrive first within the Golden Gate. Our position is deemed the more favorable, being further from land and about 10 miles in advance, and our burthen being less than that of our rival.

What a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions is man! During the whole voyage several passengers have constantly expressed fears of the unseaworthiness of the steamer, and apprehensions of the integrity of her engines and competency and caution of the officers. It has been continually declared amongst them that the supply of coal was undoubtedly deficient, and numberless ingenious speculations have been rife upon the means of "getting on" when the wheels should stop. But no sooner is the *Northerner* discovered, than every eye is directed far over the water to learn her true position and speed.

"She'll not beat us," says one.

"No, she's too far behind," says another.

"Our engine is one of the most perfect ever put together—

[1] The two anchor chain holes, one to either side of the bow, were sometimes referred to as the "eyes" of the ship (if, indeed, this is the connotation intended, it may just be a metaphor).

Map of the California coast including the islands south of Santa Barbara. Per the accompanying narrative the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* passed by Santa Catalina, St. Clemente, and other isles. The coastal steamers typically cruised a mile or two off these and other islands, but there were many instances of treasure-laden steamers and other vessels being wrecked when the course was not planned carefully, or the crew was inattentive, or visibility was not clear. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

the same that was in the *Atlantic* wrecked on the Sound a few years ago."[1]

"She'll go it," cries another. "We took in 16 days' coal at the Sud, and are but 12 days out."

In the meantime, decks are cleared, ropes adjusted, masts slushed (greased), spars set, and every preparation is made to secure the utmost speed. All fear has fled, and the one great desire is to "beat the *Northerner.*" Excitement has dethroned judgment and led captive prudence among passengers; but confidence may be reposed in the officers of the ship. They are cool and firm, and they will doubtless control her speed within the limits of safety.

I am now taking my first distinct view of the land of gold and graves. We are within a few miles of the coast. It is skirted with high mountains, but between these and the shore lies a belt of fertile land, varying in width from one to 20 miles. From the steamer, however, the view is unfavorable, this interval being imperceptible, and the high lands representing a barren, dry surface, and sparsely covered with a scrubby vegetation. Along the summit of the coast, as far as the eye can reach, hangs a ponderous cloud, which, when lighted up by the sun, is snowy white, and in striking contrast with the sombre outline of the broken and sterile mountains.

Every few miles, as we proceed up the coast, the lofty chain is broken by valleys which extend back into the interior. These present evidences of fertility and cultivation—cottages being seen, surrounded with trees, shrubbery, and many of the comforts of civilization. .

We have now arrived before a singular isolated rock called Point Neuff. It is surrounded by water, is about 30 rods in length by four in breadth, and about 75 feet high in the center, sloping gradually on all sides down to the water ...

It is now four o'clock p.m., and we are fast receding from the shore.... The steamer is standing off Monterey, celebrated as the rendezvous of the American army of occupation in California. Intervening us and the city is Point Pinos, a long stretch of low land, jutting out into the ocean and forming one arm of the bay.

We are now, again, and I presume for the last time, beyond the sight of land. If no delay occurs, the *Brother Jonathan* will, before tomorrow morning, be safely moored at her dock in San Francisco.... The steamer has today made 264 miles. We are 2,[illegible] miles from San Juan del Sur.

May 21, 1853, headed north aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan:*

Arose at [illegible] o'clock and found a foggy morning. The steamer had "laid to" from one o'clock until the hour of my rising, for here it is dangerous to enter the Bay of San Francisco in a dark night or a fog. The mail steamer however, was brought through, and moored in the night, very much to the chagrin of our passengers. But the captain acted the wiser part considering the safety of the ship and her burthen, of more importance than the [illegible] shouts of a multitude of a victory achieved at the risk of their existence.

At [illegible] o'clock [illegible]. The steamer has now arrived at the Pacific Wharf. All is bustle and confusion. The mate is hoarsely giving the order to "make fast," and the sailors, in obedience, are busy with the ropes and cables. The wharf is crowded with the multitude: hand carts, drays and hacks. Many persons are pressing their way on board in search of expected friends, and the weary passengers are collecting their valuables and preparing to bid the good steamer a hasty farewell. The distance made since noon yesterday is 150 miles. It is therefore 2,764 miles by the steamer's track from San Juan del Sur to San Francisco.

The voyage is ended.... And, now, of the 500 companions by whom I was, an hour ago, surrounded, not one is present. They are all scattered abroad. I am alone in the midst of thousands; a stranger and almost a foreigner, within the broad sweep of the "stars and stripes."

Elisha S. Capron spent the next three months traveling around San Francisco and the state, departing California on August 16, 1853, aboard the *S.S. Winfield Scott,* this time traveling to Panama, where he crossed the isthmus and boarded the *S.S. Illinois* for the Caribbean and Atlantic leg, arriving in New York City on September 12.[2]

The *Yankee Blade* Incident

Among her many activities during this period the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* assisted in 1854 with the passage back to San Francisco of surviving passengers from the ill-fated *S.S. Yankee Blade* owned by the Independent Steamship Company.

The *Yankee Blade* weighed 1,767 tons and had been built in 1853 by the same yard in New York that had launched the *Brother Jonathan* in 1850. She was soon sent to California to engage in the coastwise trade from San Francisco to Panama. Although the ship could carry close to 1,000 passengers, it was difficult to sell that many tickets for each voyage. Heavy losses were sustained, and to maintain low prices the amenities for patrons were reduced. Soon, it became known that passage aboard the *Yankee Blade* was just the opposite of luxurious travel. Indeed, even a satirical ballad criticizing the ship was published. As in other areas of commercial endeavor and public service, low price and high or even decent quality were not compatible.

[1] This is a very curious instance of the much-discussed (see earlier account) engine from the wrecked *Atlantic* being described as an *advantage.* If anything, anyone reading accounts from nautical history can selectively quote material to reinforce just about any point of view!

[2] The *S.S. Winfield Scott,* built by Westervelt and McKay in New York and launched on October 27, 1850, arrived in San Francisco for the first time on April 28, 1852, having made the transit from Panama with 700 passengers in just 14 days. She bore the flag of the Independent Line for the remainder of the year, after which she was in service for the New York & San Francisco Steamship Company. She departed San Francisco on May 6, 1852, with 580 passengers to Panama, and was back in California on June 16 with 600 passengers including 85 ladies. In May 1853 the ship was purchased by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. On December 1, 1853, the *Winfield Scott* weighed anchor in the harbor of San Francisco and headed toward Panama. Captain Simon F. Blunt was at the helm, the first ship he had ever commanded. On board were about 400 passengers, the crew, sacks of mail, and over $875,000 in gold treasure (per the manifest) plus coins and various personal effects carried by the passengers. On December 2, 1853, off the coast to the south of Santa Barbara, and about 30 miles distant from it, the *Winfield Scott* became lost in a dense fog. She struck rocks on Anacapa Island, and for a time was half submerged. Most of the passengers and nearly all of the gold treasure aboard were taken off. The ship drifted into deeper water and sank. • In contrast, the *S.S. Illinois,* built by Smith & Dimon, New York, in 1851 for $480,000, saw service with the U.S. Mail Steamship Co. in the Atlantic in the 1850s, was sold to Cornelius Vanderbilt for $25,000, and run from New York to Chagres and Aspinwall and also on the run to LeHavre, France. After years of service for various owners, she was scrapped in 1888.

On September 30, 1854, with an estimated 812 passengers and 122 crew members aboard (other estimates ranged as high as 1,200 total), Captain Henry T. Randall of the *S.S. Yankee Blade* tried to establish a speed record from San Francisco to Panama, as such an accomplishment could have excellent effect in advertising and perhaps focus favorable attention on the vessel, offsetting published complaints of the ship's meager accommodations and unclean conditions.[1]

Cutting close to the California coast, at about 3:30 in the afternoon of October 1, in thick fog, the *Yankee Blade* struck a submerged reef off Port Arguello, although the captain thought she was in deep water about 20 miles from shore. The vessel was stranded at a rakish angle with the first 60 feet of her bow raised on the reef and her stern submerged in about 50 feet of water. Confusion reigned among the officers and crew as they sought safety for themselves, apparently with little concern for the passengers.

Waves breaking over the stern caused extensive damage and broke away some wooden sections. About $152,000 in gold coins consigned by the San Francisco banking house of Page, Bacon & Co. was stored in a vault at the bottom of the hull, which quickly flooded. Other valuables on board included varying amounts of personal effects and money owned by the passengers.

Soon after the crash Captain Randall took about 30 passengers on shore in a lifeboat, but elected to remain in safety there and not return to the wreck. His first officer did likewise, but as his lifeboat was nearing the shore it became wrecked and 17 of the 22 aboard were drowned. Meanwhile, Randall's young son, Henry, Jr., was appointed to remain on board and supervise, but events quickly proved that he was incompetent to do so. By evening about 200 of the passengers and crew had been transferred to the beach where they stayed with the captain and first officer, while the remaining occupants waited for the morrow. The wind rose in the night, and the wooden hull began to break up on the rocks. Absent the commanding officer and his assistant, confusion and panic reigned aboard the ship. Steerage passengers broke into the liquor lockers, and many became drunk. A rampage of shooting and looting ensued, and first-class passengers were threatened, robbed, and terrorized.

Details of the conduct aboard appeared in the *Alta California*, October 10, 1854:

> As soon as the ship struck, a gang of fiends armed themselves, broke open the bar, and then proceeded to cut and break open the trunks of passengers. The ship was entirely under their control, and passengers did not dare to go below for their baggage, which might in many instances have been saved. Knives and pistols were used, and passengers who dared to interfere to save their own property were summarily knocked down, and kicked, and threatened with being shot. Several pistols were fired, and it is said one or two passengers were killed. It is supposed by some that the compass had been tampered with, for the purpose of losing the ship, that these plunders might be committed.
>
> The passengers have lost their baggage, and nearly all of them their money. We think the loss of passengers, besides the treasure list, may be safely put down at half a million of dollars....
>
> When the steamer was threatening to go to pieces any minute, some of the gang of pirates on board got possession of the life preservers and demanded enormous prices of the passengers for them, in some cases taking gold watches from them. A Mr. Gaston informs us that he purchased one from the steward [J. Belknap] of the *Yankee Blade*, for which he paid him $40. Such things as this speak little for human nature.

At 8:00 the next morning the small coastal steamer *S.S. Goliah*, under Captain Samuel Haley, came by and despite heavy seas succeeded with her lifeboats in putting about 600 passengers on board.[2] Supplies including clothing, food, and canvas were landed on the beach for the use of the 200 or so still stranded. The *Goliah* took the survivors to Santa Barbara and San Pedro (port of Los Angeles) on the way to its final port of San Diego where the majority of the passengers were disembarked. The *Goliah* then returned to pick up those who had remained on the shore near the wreck.

Unfortunately, in the meantime the beach had become a scene of self-inflicted disaster, as the ship's firemen and a few others—brandishing firearms—took most of the provisions for themselves and also relieved helpless passengers of their money and other valuable goods that had been brought ashore. Both the shipboard experience and that on the beach seemed to be the equivalent of hell on earth for the travelers. A rare exception to the behavior of the crew was Third Officer J.H. Kennard, who expressed concern for the welfare of the passengers and did as much as he could to help them.

Seventeen to 50 passengers, mostly women and children lost their lives.[3] J.P. Pittman of Downieville, California, a passenger who assisted with the rescue of many women and children, averred that "at least 200 perished."[4] By the morning of October 3 the *Yankee Blade* had broken apart.

[1] Sources include accounts in *Alta California*, October 10, 11, 16, [illegible] December 1, 1854; also January 6, 7, 10, 14, 16, 18, 23, 26, and 2[illegible] April 6, 1855. *New York Times*, November 10, 1854, and January [illegible]. Copies furnished to the author by Dan Owens.

[2] The *Alta California*, October 10, 1854, quoted an account [illegible] 850 passengers from the *Yankee Blade* were taken aboard to add to the 135 already on the *Goliah*.

[3] Kemble, pp. 144 (account from *San Francisco Prices Current and Shipping List*, October 14, 1854) and 252. Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields*, pp. 239-240, 248-250 (among others). Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, 1938, pp. 144-14[illegible] (The quotation of a small part of Vought's extensive commentary is from this source. Unlike [illegible] other observers, Vought did not criticize the [illegible].) Richard M. Benson, *Steamships and Motorships of the West Coast*, p. 80. William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1807-1868*, p. 245. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January 18[illegible], p. 110, [illegible] the number of deaths was given as "about 30." Kemble, p. 14[illegible] [illegible] lives were lost." Other estimates were as low as 15.

[4] *New York Times*, November 10, 1854. Another account in the same issue placed the number of passengers aboard at 812 plus a crew of 122 for a total of 934, of which "we are satisfied that not more than 50 perished."

Many of the survivors who had been taken to San Diego by the *S.S. Goliah* were brought back to San Francisco by the *Brother Jonathan,* under Captain C.P. Seabury, who earned high praise. At his destination a large crowd in Portsmouth Square proposed to present him with a gold watch "as a mark of esteem for the hospitable manner in which the destitute passengers were treated on board of his ship on the way from San Diego to this port."

All of the passengers had been on their way to Panama when the wreck occurred. There was general unhappiness expressed at the line's policy of bringing them back to their port of embarkation, rather than giving them accommodations to their intended destination. In San Francisco the line offered to refund *just 25%* of the ticket purchase price, "evidently taking refuge behind some clause that gave the purchasers passage on that particular steamer."[1]

The conduct of Captain Henry T. Randall and his thieving, ghoulish crew in the *Yankee Blade* disaster was truly a sorry reflection upon human nature, and the officers of the ship were widely condemned in later accounts of the mishap. The entire *Yankee Blade* affair remains one of the sorriest chapters in the annals of the American passenger steamship trade.

Years later the *New York Times* in its obituary for Captain Randall, July 9, 1874, printed this:

> Captain Henry Randall, well known as a steamship commander, died at his residence at East 23rd Street yesterday morning, aged [illegible] years. His birthplace was Berlin, Rensselaer County, New York, and he was for several years commander of the steamboat *Empire* on Lake Erie.
>
> After removing to [illegible], in 1850, he was appointed to the command of the steamer *Yankee Blade,* in Mills' Independent Line. He had also been captain of the steamship *North* [illegible] [illegible] gold.
>
> After spending some time on the Pacific Coast he returned to New York. [illegible] to death.

Upon reading the preceding, one might think that Randall was one of the most skillful, most accomplished, most respected steamboat captains in American history!

Voyages Along the Coast

A typical notice by an express agent soliciting cargo for the *Brother Jonathan* appeared in *The San Francisco Herald,* May 16, 1854:

> WELLS, FARGO & Co.'s
> Express Notice
> For the Steamers of May 16th
>
> Our regular express for the Atlantic states and Europe will be dispatched on Tuesday, May 16th at NOON by the steamers
>
> GOLDEN GATE
> J.T. Watkins, Esq., Commander
> BROTHER JONATHAN
> C.P. Seabury, Commander
>
> In charge of a special messenger on each steamer. Treasure received for shipment (and insured) until 9 o'clock a.m. of Tuesday, May 16th, and small packages and parcels until within one hour of the time of sailing.

"Treasure" typically consisted of minted gold coins and large gold ingots packed in cases for transport to eastern cities, particularly New York and Philadelphia, and across the Atlantic to London. Many of these shipments were deposited at the Philadelphia Mint or, beginning in 1854, at the new federal New York City Assay Office. To avoid thievery by the crew and professional crooks, the treasure was checked with the purser and kept in a special compartment. In other instances, agents for the express companies secured private staterooms and guarded the valuables under their charge.

Soon, the Nicaragua route was to undergo a dramatic change:

General William Walker, an American soldier of fortune and filibuster, arrived in Nicaragua in June 1855. By November he and his troops had seized control of most of the country, after which Walker controlled the nation's destiny, at least for a time.[2] On February 18, 1856, the charter of the Accessory Transit Co. and the privileges of related Nicaragua Transit Co. were revoked. The last steamer to come down from New York City to Nicaragua was the *Star of the West,* which had departed on March 8. On the Pacific side of Nicaragua, the *Brother Jonathan* was the last steamer to serve the route that year.

This was good news for the directors of the rival Pacific Mail Steamship Co., which operated through the Panama route. All along they had been paying the Nicaragua Transit Company a subsidy (bribe) of $40,000 per month to stay away from Panama, and this agreement was in effect whether or not the recipient was operating ships. In short order, Pacific Mail raised the steerage rates on its line from $100 to $125 and the second class rate from $175 to $200. The first class charge remained unchanged at $250.

Vanderbilt's former partners and present enemies, Charles Morgan and Cornelius K. Garrison, sensed an opportunity and secured a franchise for themselves along the now unused Nicaragua transit. From April 1856 through March 1857 the route was thus reopened. In an improbable scenario, Morgan and Garrison continued to back the impostor Walker, while Vanderbilt laid plans to support mercenary troops in Costa Rica who planned to invade Nicaragua.

[1] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific,* 1938, p. 148.
[2] John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1849-1869,* 1943, p. 74.

Conditions for passengers on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company line were not admirable, as this letter from Franklin A. Buck to his sister Mary indicates. Buck is in the foothills of the Sierras, while Mary is back home in Maine. The time is November 15, 1857:[1]

> Yours of September 30th came yesterday.... The mails have been very irregular lately, all owing to that *abomination*, the P.M.S. Co. [Pacific Mail Steamship Co.] They have the line across Nicaragua in dispute. They have the company at Tehuantepec and the Mexican government in a perfect snarl and in the meantime they have the whole thing in their own hands and are making millions out of it. Now, one would suppose that a company composed of human men would after making such immense sums as they have, let up a little on the passage, put on first class steamers, treat the public liberally, etc.
>
> Now, I don't know who these men are that control this thing, but I will tell how they do act. The are running now the old *Panama* that came round in '49 and laying up their best boats. They charge more for passage than they did in '49. They abuse and starve the steerage passengers worse than ever. They have literally *murdered* hundreds of persons on the passage. You don't hear much of this perhaps, but I see men every day who came that route, and nothing but youth and a strong constitution save them. Just let them lose a boat on this side [Pacific route] carelessly and a million or so of money and 400 lives and I wouldn't like to have my neck in the place of the agent or engineer if he ever came to San Francisco.
>
> I know several of the passengers on the *Central A.*, but only one intimately, J.L. Weeks of Lowell, Mass. He had $3,000 belted around him when he left Cole's store and if I know the character of the man he sank with it....[2]

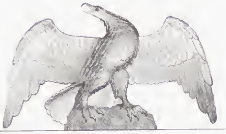
Meanwhile, the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was plying other routes. Thus, we leave Walker and Nicaragua behind, noting that his life and adventures provided thrilling reading to readers of American newspapers and magazines for much of the next decade.[3]

[1] *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush*, p. 170.

[2] The reference is to the *S.S. Central America*, which went down in a hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean, September 12, 1857, on the way from Aspinwall to New York City. An estimated 435 lives and about $1.6 million in treasure were lost. Only about 162 were saved (estimates per Normand E. Klare, *The Last Voyage of the Central America 1857*). Weeks, who was traveling in steerage, was among those who perished.

[3] Walker surrendered on May 1, 1857, to Commander Charles Henry Davis of the U.S. Navy to escape capture and was returned to the United States. Undaunted, Walker formed another company of mercenaries, and in November of the same year sailed from Mobile Bay to Nicaragua to secure his position as "president" of the country. Shortly after landing near Greytown he was arrested by Commodore Hiram Paulding and sent back to the United States. In August 1860 he again landed in Nicaragua, having eluded American and British naval forces who had been on the lookout for him. On September 3 he was arrested by Captain Norvell Salmon of the Royal Navy and turned over to local authorities. Walker was court martialed, and on September 12, 1860, he died at Trujillo in a hail of bullets from a firing squad

Chapter Nine



The Brother Jonathan *on the Northern Route*

Sold Again

In November 1857 the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was sold to John T. Wright of the Merchants Accommodation Line, who changed her name to the *Commodore,* a rather curious turn of events inasmuch as Cornelius ("Commodore") Vanderbilt had not owned her in the most recent several years. Perhaps the use of the name suggested very cheap ticket prices. Wright had come to San Francisco from the East in the early wave of immigrants in 1849, later doing well in shipping in California waters as well as to and from the Sandwich Islands.

In the late 1850s the *Commodore* ran from San Francisco to Seattle and also called on Vancouver and Portland, competing on the route with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. The British Columbia gold fever (see below) was rampant, and the *Commodore* and her sister ship, the *Pacific* (acquired by the same line in July 1858), profited immensely from the related cargoes.

A New Gold Strike

In 1858 the *S.S. Commodore* was front row center in the latest gold rush:

Although gold had been discovered in British Columbia years earlier,[1] knowledge of the situation was not widespread. The Hudson's Bay Company, which controlled much of the commerce in the area, realized that gold existed, but the firm was not eager to disseminate the news, as it was felt it would disrupt trade in the region. Nevertheless, various individuals profited from the exploitation of scattered gold sites in British Columbia.

By the end of 1857 the news of deposits and specimens of gold from the Fraser River district had attracted the attention of merchants, bankers, and miners alike. The Hudson's Bay Company exported 300 ounces of gold in the later months of the year. By Christmas week the situation was such that Governor James Douglas was prompted to issue a proclamation which "forbade all persons to dig or disturb the soil in search of gold until authorized in that behalf by her majesty's colonial government," further noting that all such metal belonged to the crown.

On January 14, 1858, the same individual reported:

> From the successful result of experiments made in washing the gold in the sands of the tributary streams of the Fraser River there is reason to suppose that the gold region is extensive, and I entertain sanguine hopes that future researchers will develop stores of wealth perhaps equal to the gold-fields of California—the geological formations observed in the Sierra Nevada of California being similar in character to the structure of the corresponding range of mountains in this latitude.

The cat was out of the bag.

On April 10, 1858, sensational news of the bonanza was brought to San Francisco in a dispatch landed by the S.S. *Commodore.* John T. Wright lost no time in turning the situation to his line's advantage, placing this advertisement in city papers:

> For the new gold mines on Fraser's River, Puget Sound.
>
> In consequence of the favorable news received from Fraser's River, the undersigned has been induced to put on the well-known steamship *Commodore,* which will sail from Pacific Wharf on Tuesday, April 20, 1858, at 10 o'clock a.m., touching at Mendocino, Trinidad, Crescent City, Port Orford, and Victoria, Vancouver's Island, connecting with steamship *Sea Bird* at Port Townsend for all ports on Puget's Sound.

1 For example, during the summer of 1850 Joseph W. McKay found particles of gold on Vancouver Island.
2 *Alta California,* April 16, 1858.

> For freight and passage apply on board, at Pacific Wharf, or to
>
> J.T. Wright
>
> 89 Front St., upstairs.

The solicitation was successful, and about 300 or more (some estimates ranged up to 500) passengers paid $25 to $50 each for tickets northward on Tuesday April 20, and other gold seekers were picked up at ports along the way. On the following Sunday the *S.S. Commodore* landed at Esquimalt, a sleepy village of 500 inhabitants near the gold strike in British Columbia, discharging, according to one embellished account, "between 400 and 500 Yankees armed with revolvers and bowie knives."[1] However, the local folk welcomed the strangers, who brought a generous measure of energy and enthusiasm with them and were expected to spend money locally, as miners always did.

The *Commodore* continued on its trip from Esquimalt, proceeding by way of Port Townsend, Washington Territory, then to Nanaimo to load coal in her bunkers, then to her final destination of Victoria, British Columbia. On April 30, 1858, she departed Victoria for San Francisco, completing the inauguration of a new gold-rush route.

Excitement!

Excitement prevailed! By this time new California strikes had diminished and many old "diggings" had petered out. Most mining was done not by individuals, but by large corporations that blasted rock tunnels or washed entire hillsides away with "monitor" hoses directing high-pressure streams of water.

"California is to be outdone, as the rivers of British Columbia are larger than those of California. The glories of Australia shall pale before this new golden *aurora borealis*," noted a gushing account which mentioned in passing the gold strikes in Australia earlier in the decade.

In a situation reminiscent of that which occurred in California in 1848-1849, farmers left their horses and oxen, tradesmen boarded up shops and employers were left without laborers as wave after wave of eager adventurers traveled to the Fraser River in hopes of finding a gold bonanza. Many miners who had not made fortunes in the foothills of the Sierras during the days of the Forty Niners were eager to try again, this time in British Columbia.

Hubert H. Bancroft wrote in his *History of British Columbia*:

> California was now rapidly losing population. Men of all classes abandoned their occupations in the interior and followed the crowd to San Francisco. Money was borrowed at [illegible] to be advanced on goods for British Columbia. It was not strange that the [illegible] opportunity would be seized by the [illegible] of San Francisco to stem the current by [illegible] the northern country under the [illegible] of the Fraser [illegible].
>
> The whole of California in April 1858 was in a ferment. Business in the interior was disorganized, and in many places broken up. Hundreds too impatient to wait for the steamers mounted to horses and hastened overland, especially from the northern counties of California, making the distance in 18 days. While towns in the interior were being deserted, San Francisco derived the benefit of the influx and of the outfitting of the miners, and the shippers rejoiced at the prospects of the Fraser trade. Shrewd storekeepers in the mountain counties hurried down to establish themselves in San Francisco.
>
> During April and May, the rumors more or less fabulous of gold discoveries in the north continued to circulate throughout California and in the Oregon and Washington territories. Vessels left San Francisco carrying three times the number allowed by law. John Nugent, a special agent of the United States, estimated that in May, June, and July 1858, 23,000 persons went from San Francisco by sea, and about 8,000 more overland—safely 30,000 or 33,000 in all in the course of the season; and that out of these there returned before January 1859 all but 3,000. None were too poor and none too rich to go. Young and old and even the decrepit. Some out of restlessness or curiosity; others for profit or prey.

Bancroft quoted the account of one Lundin Brown, who noted that "never in the history of migrations of men has there been such a rush, so sudden and so vast."

The same historian reported that from the time that the first major load of 450 adventurers had left San Francisco on the *Commodore* on April 20, 1858, continuing through the beginning of the second week in June, 2,500 would-be miners had departed by sea. He estimated that 5,000 more were at Puget Sound further north and on their way to the Fraser River.

In the meantime, steamboat owners helped promulgate and expand the many tales of treasures to be found. Ticket sales soared! The erstwhile *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* now flying the *COMMODORE* flag, was front row center in its second gold rush!

The gold excitement on the Fraser River in British Columbia continued for the next several years, but not with the enthusiasm evinced in 1858 and 1859. Bancroft stated that the most important effect of the gold excitement was to lay the foundation for permanent settlements in British Columbia and to bring to the area many energetic individuals who later turned their attention to other enterprises.

Meanwhile, the *S.S. Commodore* continued plying the coastal run.

Almost Swamped

On one trip in July 1858 with about 300 to 350 passengers aboard, the *Commodore* ran into heavy weather two days out of San Francisco on the way north, and with several feet of water flooding her holds and extinguishing fires under the boilers she came to a standstill. Captain George W. Staples ordered that the ship be lightened by shoving all deck cargo into the sea. Passengers and crew were given buckets to bail water from the hold.

[1] *Alta California*, May 6, 1858.

The plan was successful, the boiler fires were relighted, and the ship limped back to home port. Disgruntled passengers—mostly would-be miners on their way north to find gold—found the ship's owner, John T. Wright, in the hold, and in no uncertain terms demanded full refunds. This was done, and at a cost of $12,000.[1]

As events would prove, the near-swamping of the *Commodore* in July 1858 marked her last trip for the Merchants Accommodation Line.

In time, interest in the British Columbia gold fields waned. H.H. Bancroft continued the story:

> The immigration suddenly stopped; and more: in a few months the adventurers were nearly all back again in "God's country," as they called the sunnier regions of the south, full of bitter denunciations of the route, the country, the resources, yet knowing no more, after the return, of the extent and wealth of the mines than they knew before leaving in quest of them. It was argued that the deposits on the lower Fraser River must be small, and if the head-waters contained greater wealth, the remoteness, Indian difficulties, want of supplies, and the short duration of the mining season, would forever make them inferior to California as a mining resort.

The same account quoted population figures for the Fraser River district as 17,000 in 1858 (the peak), 8,000 in 1859, 7,000 in 1860, and only 5,000 in 1861. Estimates of gold production for 1858 were relatively modest and ranged from $500,000 to $2,120,000, tiny fractions of the California counterpart years earlier.

In the years after 1858 several new gold discoveries were made in British Columbia. At Cariboo in 1861 a particularly rich strike was located. In this year gold production in the area was estimated by one account to be $5,000,000 but, like all tales of golden treasure, the figure is open to question. Facts were scarce. There was very little in the way of official recording of gold acquired by miners. In 1862 a provisional mint was set up at New Westminster, British Columbia, and Albrecht Küner of San Francisco cut the dies for pattern $10 and $20 gold pieces, of which only a dozen or so were ever made.

California Steam Navigation Co. Established

In early 1854 commercial interests banded together to form a monopoly on travel from San Francisco upriver to Sacramento and elsewhere. The *Annals of California* described the scenario:[2]

> A combination was formed among the owners of the various steamboats plying on the bay and interior waters. The capital of this great joint-stock association, called the California Steam Navigation Company, was declared to be $2,500,000; divided into shares of $1,000. It was provided that the partnership should exist for *fifty years* after the 22d day of February 1854—that being the date of incorporation. Merchants and others, both in San Francisco and the large interior towns, considered that their interests would be prejudicially affected by this combination, which would, for a time at least, effectually hinder all competition. Very soon, the people of Marysville and Sacramento began to call public meetings, and agitate the question of no monopoly. Preliminary arrangements, while we write, are being undertaken to form companies to start opposition boats.

The rates of freight and passage established by the old combined companies are as follows: From San Francisco to Sacramento. passage—$10 cabin, $7 deck; freight, $8 per ton. From San Francisco to Marysville: passage—$12 cabin, $10 deck; freight, $15 per ton, and $12 measurement. From San Francisco to Stockton: passage—$10 cabin, $7 deck; freight, $6 per ton.

In time the steamers of the monopoly were supplemented by ships of other companies, destroying California Steam Navigation's dictatorial position on rates. The story of nineteenth-century California is filled with accounts of many monopolies and near-monopolies on just about every area of transportation.[3] Similarly, accounts of steamship monopolies that were eventually threatened by "opposition" lines abound in American history, including in East Coast ports and rivers, the aforementioned Panama vs. Nicaragua contest, and other venues.

Beginning in 1862, shares of the California Steam Navigation Co. were traded on the San Francisco Mining Exchange. A representative quotation is provided by the sale on September 27 of that year of shares at 39½ each.[4]

New Owner, New Appearance

In December 1858 the *S.S. Commodore* was sold for $40,000 to the California Steam Navigation Company. Regaining her old name *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, the ship was put in drydock at Mare Island in San Francisco Bay by its new owner. In the following months she was rehabilitated and repaired, a process which also involved replacing certain structural parts with the use of 5,000 bolts and resheeting her bottom with copper. Staterooms, berths, and other passenger areas were cleaned and redecorated, and the entire ship was given a fresh appearance. Soon she was back in service on the old route from San Francisco north to Victoria, and return, with stops along the way.

In Crescent City, a small town on the rocky northern coast of California not far from the Oregon border, this was printed in *The Herald*, March 16, 1859:

> The *Brother Jonathan* arrived on Sunday morning under command of Captain Staples. She has resumed her old name

1 Jim Gibbs, *Disaster Log of Ships: A Pictorial Account of Shipwrecks, California to Alaska*, 1971, pp. 20-29.
2 Page 521.
3 In following decades the railroads exacted high tribute from towns in California, promising to bring prosperity to a location by putting track there or threatening to bypass a town and turn it into a place of desolation. Later, Frank Norris' famous novel, *The Octopus*, told of the railroad vs. the interests of farmers.
4 Charles A. Fracchia, "The Founding of the San Francisco Mining Exchange," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, March 1969.

under which we hope she may be more fortunate than she was as the *Commodore*.

She has been for a long time on the dock at Mare Island, where she has been thoroughly overhauled and refitted throughout. Forty thousand dollars or thereabouts have been spent on her. She has been strengthened in every possible way and is now if anything stauncher than the day she was first launched. She has a No. 1 certificate and is now worth the patronage of the public.

The preceding seems to imply that in earlier times as the *Commodore* the ship had problems and was disliked by those who traveled aboard her. Now, all seemed to be in fine order.

The "New" *Brother Jonathan*

In July 1860 the *Brother Jonathan* was sold again, as the California Steam Navigation Company decided to abandon coastwise shipping and concentrate on steamers on inland rivers. The buyer of the *Brother Jonathan* was Major Samuel J. Hensley, the firm's former San Francisco agent, who had recently formed the Oregon & San Diego Steamship Company. The purchase price for two vessels, the *Brother Jonathan* and the *Senator*, was reported to be $200,000.[1] Title to the *Brother Jonathan* was changed to Hensley on August 7, 1860. Both ships were put into service from San Francisco down the coast, calling at San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and San Pedro (the port for the city of Los Angeles), and San Diego. The *Brother Jonathan* continued on this route through early 1861.[2]

In 1861 she underwent virtually a complete rebuilding at North's Shipyard in San Francisco to strengthen her superstructure and replace nearly all of her decking and interior. It was said to be the most extensive shipbuilding project ever undertaken in the state. The *Brother Jonathan* would be virtually a new ship.

This account was carried by the *Alta California*, May 4, 1861:

SHIP BUILDING IN SAN FRANCISCO
The New Steamship *Brother Jonathan*.

Major Hensley has commenced an extensive job in shipbuilding in this vicinity, altogether the most costly and important yet attempted in California. We refer to the rebuilding of the steamship *Brother Jonathan*, out beyond Mission Rock, near the powder houses at North's shipyard, where Capt. Aaron M. Burns has the superintendence of the work.

The frame has been entirely stripped, leaving only the bottom timbers and lower futtocks—a mere shell. Under this, while the vessel was yet afloat, a long shoe was run along the keel, forming in fact a false keel with a rounded or convex surface. The ways have, along the centre, a grooved piece running the length, into which the shoe fits, and up this inclined plane the ship was hauled to her present position, where she is to be rebuilt—or rather, a new ship built, for everything is to be new save the bottom, which is solid (there being no spaces between the timbers) and in all respects as good as new. Probably not two ships in California have as strong a bottom as this, and certainly no timber in this country could be found with which to build such a one. Thus the ship will be launched in about three months new, and good for years of service. She retains her diagonal iron braces, and in addition to the main keelson, which has a rider, two strong bilge keelsons have been put into her. She is to be rebuilt with Port Orford timber.

She will have but two decks, instead of three as formerly, and the interior arrangement so altered as to turn into a freight room the space formerly occupied as a main-saloon, while the saloon formerly on the lower-deck will now be on the upper, and will measure 120 feet in length. All the deck frames and decks, and, in fact, the whole inside of the ship, as well as her entire upper works and timbers, will be new.

Two of Martin's patent tubular boilers have been placed in her, and are now being set and bedded. They rest on the bilge keelsons, and thus afford room for workmen to pass under, between them and the ship's skin, for any necessary work. These boilers are the latest improvement, are of the pattern now in common use on the Atlantic seaboard, and are supposed to be the best yet invented. One of their advantages is that each boiler has six furnaces, ranged on each side of the fire-room, which runs fore and aft. The fires can thus be raked down at very short notice, and the amount of steam can be reduced by opening dampers which admit cold air, upon the system of tubes, which are thus easily exposed. The Martin's patent is supposed to be the most economical boiler in existence, while it also combines the requisite measure of safety.

The old engine will be retained. It is in good condition, but is undergoing a thorough examination. The entrance of the ship is to be remodeled, so that the ugly flare, without sufficient bearings, which she used to have, will be changed. This will tend to increase her speed, which, it is supposed, will be equal to that of any ship now on this coast. The engine has a 72-inch cylinder with an 11-foot stroke—enough to insure great speed with the improved model. The ship, which is intended for the northern trade, will hereafter easily carry 900 tons of freight. The carpenter work is to be done by John G. North, and the joiner work by Wingate.

It is worth a trip out to the powder houses to see what has been accomplished thereabouts in a couple of months. The drive is a pleasant one, over a good buggy road all they way, and has in part, for most people, the advantage of being a novelty. You take the Brannan Street road, cross the bridge, and turn off to the left towards the bay, just before rising the hill at the slaughter-houses. The road then leads across the Potrero Nuevo—now covered with grass and flowers—and comes out at North's new shipyard, where the steamer looms up close beside you, stripped to her bows and looking, for all the world, like the skeleton of some gigantic antediluvian megatherium or mastodon, raked out from the ruins of an extinct creation. She is an illustration, however, of the grub and butterfly; for, however like a singed cat she may look now, she will come out gay as a pink about midsummer.[3] The affair deserves notice,

[1] The *Senator*, which came around Cape Horn and arrived in San Francisco on October 27, 1849, entered the river trade upstream to Sacramento. On her first trip, November 5, fares were $25 per person to Sacramento and $30 for the return trip, plus $10 if a stateroom was wanted. Meals were $2 each. Freight was carried at $40 to $50 per ton. The ship was immensely successful, and in the first year she earned $60,000 *per month* for her owners (cf. *Hutchings' California Magazine*, July 1859.) Later, profits declined as expected as additional steamers were put on the route.

[2] Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, 1938, p. 288.

[3] Probably referring to a pink, a flower of the genus *Dianthus*, such as the carnation and sweet William. Less likely, it referred to a pink, a small sail boat with an overhanging stern.

> because it is the first attempt to build a large sea-going ship on the Pacific Coast.
>
> Quite a little colony has sprung up in and about the shipyard, where about 75 men have been employed at a time, and a number of buildings—such as blacksmith shops, rigging-rooms, store houses, dwelling houses, and, of course, a "refreshment saloon"—have gone up like toadstools in the night. It is supposed that the ship, when completed, will cost not far from $100,000.

Work progressed apace all summer and through the autumn at North's and Hathaway's shipyards. Finally, on December 15, 1861, this notice appeared in the *Alta California:*

> **TRIAL TRIP OF A NEW STEAMSHIP**
> **A Splendid Day—An Impromptu Race**
>
> Yesterday morning a goodly company of gentlemen assembled on the decks of the new steamship *Brother Jonathan*, to enjoy a day's steaming on the trial trip of this splendid steamer. A little after 10 o'clock, the guests being assembled, the lines were cast off, and the steamer's head turned down the bay, opening out the heads in a few minutes, through which we steamed at a rapid rate with an ebb tide.
>
> Chief Engineer [Elijah] Mott was satisfied, after being out half an hour, that the steaming arrangements of the *Brother Jonathan* were all he could wish. Passing Fort Point, we stood over to the North Heads, crossed over Four Fathom Bank, and then headed for the Farallones. The day was magnificent, the warm sun brightly shining, a light air going, and the sea almost as smooth as a mild pond. As the trip was planned to make a voyage to sea, and as the "Bar" might have been rough at this time of year, no ladies were invited, as seasickness was not an impossibility to the fair sex with a rough sea.
>
> After standing out to within about five miles of the Farallone Islands, we turned our gallant craft's head homeward, giving the machinery and boilers a good testing, to the satisfaction of the officers and owner.
>
> After getting into the harbor, a superior lunch was set in the spacious cabin, to which the guests did ample justice. With the repast, wit, toasts and sentiment flowed. The charming weather brought all hands on deck soon again, and as the steamer glided past the city front, the various steamers rang their bells in welcome and dipped their ensigns. After running down as far as Hunter's Point, the ship was on her return put to her metal between that point and the wharf, and accomplished the distance of seven miles—in 20 minutes. This is what might be called fast going for a huge ocean steamer. A sail round Alcatraz Island was to wind up the trip, but about this time the Sacramento steamers[1] made their appearance, and by common consent a brush was decided upon with the crack steamer *New World*.
>
> The *Jonathan* was "slowed down" until the *World* passed us, when Chief Engineer Mott "opened her out," and Capt. Burns took the wheel. Away sped the fast river craft, and close on her heels rushed the ocean steamer. As our noble vessel gathered headway, we closed upon her, and when abreast of Angel Island, the *Jonathan* passed the *New World* with perfect ease, continuing on to "Red Rock," a distance of some nine or 10 miles, leading our opponent some two and a half minutes. We rounded the rock, and made the run back to Pacific Wharf in 30 minutes, which would make her speed about 20 miles an hour, with the end of an ebb tide in her favor, except the last two miles.
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* is a new ship in all save her "ribs," and was rebuilt of seasoned timber grown on the Pacific side, and put together by North, the celebrated ship builder of this city. She is now as staunch and fine a steamer as this port can boast of. She is owned by Gen. S.J. Hensley, and is to run in the Oregon trade, starting on her first voyage on Thursday next.
>
> Before 6 o'clock in the evening the landing was made, the guests being highly delighted with the steamer, the day and with each other.

As promised, the revivified *Brother Jonathan*, billed as "new," was ready for commerce. Passengers and shippers of freight were invited to inquire:

> The new and splendid steamship *Brother Jonathan* built expressly for this route and with unequaled accommodations for passengers and freight, Samuel J. Dowel, commander, will leave Pacific Street Wharf for the above ports [Portland and Victoria] on Thursday, December 19, 1861, at 4 o'clock p.m.
>
> For freight or passage apply on board or to S.J. Hensley, Washington Street opposite the Post Office, upstairs.

The two new decks instead of the former three served to facilitate loading and unloading and lightened the overall weight of the ship from 1,359 tons to 1,181 tons, permitting more cargo to be carried. The masts were strengthened, and the foremast was moved. The upper deck was fitted with a new dining and entertainment saloon measuring 120 feet long and paneled in California redwood, with limited officers' quarters as well as small rooms for storage or other purposes. First-class single and double cabins were on the main deck as were cabins for most of the ship's officers and the purser's room. The *Brother Jonathan* was now quite elegantly appointed, surely as queenly as any other vessel in the coastwise trade—a far cry from the era in which Vanderbilt had reconfigured the ship to permit 750 passengers to be crammed aboard, mostly in steerage.

The main deck area formerly used as the lounge, about 80 by 20 feet in size, was now a large room for cargo, a position that facilitated loading and unloading with ease. Presumably, inside corridors providing access to staterooms were constructed so that the passengers would not have to go among the stored freight items. In addition, cargo space was provided in the lower hold, the traditional location, easily accessible by doors from the main deck. Capacity for goods carried was expanded from 700 tons to 900 tons. The extra 200 tons would be useful in servicing the ever increasing demand for freight to northern towns, especially Portland.

Although terminology varied, crewmen aboard the *Brother Jonathan* called the top deck the upper or hurricane deck, with the aft or rear section called the quarter deck, a place normally reserved for the officers of the ship. The main deck was called that. The fore part was known as the promenade deck and was mostly open area for the use

[1] Engaged in river commerce between San Francisco and inland Sacramento.

of passengers although light, protected cargo could be tied in place. Both of these decks had open areas for lounging, exercise, or simply walking around the ship. The interior below the main deck was variously called the lower deck or the hold and was enclosed. Steerage accommodations for passengers were on the lower deck, with views of the sea through brass-framed glass portholes. Below the lower deck were hold compartments.

The initial sailing of the refitted ship took place a day after its originally scheduled departure, and under the command of Aaron M. Burns, an old-timer with the line, not Samuel J. Dowel as announced.

The pleasures of travel aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* formed the subject of many conversations, and within a short time she acquired an enviable reputation for quality and comfort.

Back to the C.S.N. Co.

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* continued to be registered by Hensley and his associates until April 7, 1864, but was operated by the California Steam Navigation Company, of which Hensley was a trustee. After that time she was listed once again under the ownership of the company.[1]

The loading of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in the early 1860s typically consisted of about 150 to 200 passengers and hundreds of tons of accompanying freight, the latter often discharged at Portland, where it was transported up the Columbia River by boat, connecting by rail at the falls. Goods coming north from San Francisco often included cast iron implements and machinery (from several foundries in the city), Chinese goods (imported into the city from the Orient and then reshipped to other destinations), household furniture and appliances, hardware and building supplies (except lumber), wine (from California vineyards), musical instruments of all kinds (mostly imported from the East and reshipped), mining machinery and apparatus, refining chemicals and supplies, clothing, and food. In fact, just about every article needed for commerce and everyday household use was shipped at one time or another. Cargoes were assembled by wholesalers and steamship freight agents in San Francisco who collected goods from local firms and arranged them for shipment.

Oregon was in a growth stage, and inland there was much mining and other activity in the eastern reaches of the state and nearby Idaho. Railroads and water connections to Idaho and Oregon from the Midwest were being planned and in part facilitated, but in the interim virtually all freight for the interior was received by sea routes terminating in Portland. Some freight was shipped from Portland inland to as far east and southeast as Montana and Salt Lake City.

On the "down" trip from Portland to San Francisco typical cargo consisted of gold "treasure" (dust, nuggets, and especially unparted bars from inland mines), woolen goods from mills in Oregon, and foodstuffs, along with a complement of passengers. Lumber was sometimes carried as well, especially from stops made along the coast including Crescent City. More about the gold finds in Oregon will be related in Chapter 10.

SAN FRANCISCO DIRECTORY. 7

CALIFORNIA
STEAM NAVIGATION
COMPANY.

Organized March 1st, 1854 — Capital Stock, $2,500,000.

The following are the Officers for the Years 1864-'65:

President, JAS WHITNEY, Jr; *Vice-President*, R. M JESSUP, *Secretary*, S O PUTNAM, *Trustees* SAMUEL J HENSLEY, JAS WHITNEY, Jr., ALFRED REDINGTON, WILLIAM NORRIS, RICHARD M JESSUP, B M HARTSHORNE JOHN BENSLEY, C L LOW, and N C PADDOCK · *Agents*, Sacramento, ALFRED REDINGTON and WILLIAM H TAYLOR Marysville, G. P JESSUP, Red Bluff, J. B ANDRUS · Stockton, ARTHUR CORNWALL.

DEPARTURE FROM BROADWAY WHARF
CARRYING THE UNITED STATES MAILS.

Steamer YOSEMITE .... Capt. E. A. POOLE
Steamer CHRYSOPOLIS .... Capt. E. C. M CHADWICK
Steamer ANTELOPE .... Capt. A. FOSTER
Steamer HELEN HENSLEY .... Capt. V. CUSHING
Steamer CORNELIA .... Capt. E. CONKLIN
Steamer JULIA .... Capt. ———

ONE OF THE ABOVE STEAMERS WILL
Leave every Day, at Four o'clock, P. M.
(SUNDAYS EXCEPTED,) FOR
SACRAMENTO AND STOCKTON,
Connecting with the light draught Steamers for
MARYSVILLE, COLUSA AND RED BLUFF.

☞ For further particulars, apply at the OFFICE OF THE COMPANY,
North-east Corner of Jackson and Front Streets,
JAMES WHITNEY, Jr., President.

Advertisement by the California Steam Navigation Co. for its steamers on the inland route from San Francisco, up the Sacramento River to Sacramento and Stockton, connecting with lighter draft steamers for other points. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1864-5*)

Steamer Incidents

Sometimes there would be rough passage on the route along the California coast north of San Francisco, as on December 15, 1863, when a competitor to the *Brother Jonathan*, the *S.S. Oregon*, "arrived from the north, having experienced heavy weather, and was compelled to throw a portion of the cargo overboard."[2]

[1] Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, Vol. 1, p. 63: Owners: Edward Mills 1850-1852. Cornelius Vanderbilt 1852. Nicaragua Steamship Co. 1852-1857. John T. Wright 1857-1861. California Steam Navigation Co. 1861-1865 (Hensley is not mentioned by Heyl.)

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 13 (chronicle of events

On December 3, 1863, California Steam Navigation Company's *S.S. Chrysopolis* ran into the sailing bark *Industry* and sustained light damage.[1] On October 16, 1864, the firm would experience a tragedy involving another one of its ships:[2]

> The C.S. Navigation Co.'s steamer *Sophie McLane*, running between San Francisco and Suisun, blew up at the latter place about 7 o'clock, a.m., killing and maiming several of the passengers and crew, and making the vessel a total wreck. The following were the parties killed by the explosion, or who subsequently died from its effects; Henry P. Hulburt, Commander; George Folger, pilot; Charles Yates, second engineer; and William Lawlor, deck hand.

Following this disaster, the California Steam Navigation's fleet in autumn 1864 included these steamers on the bay and river routes including to Sacramento and Stockton: *Yosemite, Chrysopolis, Antelope* (one of the more famous river steamers in California history), *Helen Hensley, Cornelia,* and *Julia.* Plying the Pacific Ocean northward to Portland and Victoria were the *Pacific* and *Brother Jonathan.*[3]

The Civil War and San Francisco

In California, loyalties were divided during the Civil War. Generally citizens in "Alta California," or the north including the home port of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* San Francisco, were pro-Union. In the southern and inland expanses of the state, particularly in agrarian districts, there was much feeling for the Confederate cause. During the 1850s it was almost an annual debate whether to divide the state into two units based upon these preferences. In 1859, the State Legislature passed such a bill, and it was even signed by the governor, but it was rejected by the United States Congress. Members of the latter body seemed to be content that California at present was, on balance, anti-slavery, and felt that to create two states, one pro-slavery and one anti-slavery, would upset the balance of power.[4]

Rocky outcrops protruding from the Pacific Ocean near the Golden Gate, the sea entrance to San Francisco Bay. (*California Life Illustrated*)

Early in the Civil War there was talk of a Pacific Republic to be formed in the West to include those with a Confederate point of view, while the remaining parts of California would adhere to the North or Union alliance. Many citizens advocated complete neutrality, stating that it made little difference anyway in the East as to what was happening in California.[5]

To protect San Francisco and the bay area, on January 19, 1861, the War Department directed Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, then in charge of the Department of the Pacific, to bring to the city two artillery companies from Fort Vancouver in the Washington Territory.[6] Fort Point on the south side of the Golden Gate and Alcatraz Island (a.k.a. Pelican Island) in San Francisco Bay, already fortified, were augmented with troops and ammunition. Before the war, in 1859, Alcatraz Island had 94 guns in place. Facilities included furnaces for heating cannonballs to cherry red, making them more destructive when embedded in an enemy ship.[7]

After the war was declared, it became proper in the city to espouse the cause of the North, and anyone publicly stating views to the contrary was criticized. In the outlying districts opinions remained mixed, perhaps reflected in this letter written several years earlier on March 19, 1853, by Franklin A. Buck, who by that time (having come to California on August 6, 1849) was a successful businessman in Sacramento. The recipient is his sister Mary back in the old hometown of Bucksport, Maine:[8]

> Received a letter from you last night. Contents noted. .. If you attend the Lyceum, hand in the following questions:

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 12, retrospective of events. *Chrysopolis* is from Chrysopolæ, an early name for the Golden Gate (the name given by John C. Frémont to the opening in 1848, this relating to the "golden land," prior to the gold discovery; cf. *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 149).

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, p. 19, retrospective of [illegible] events. The ship had been withdrawn from service on the San Francisco to San Jose route on June 25, 1864. On August 24 she was put on the run from Davis and Vallejo streets, San Francisco, to the [illegible] Railroad Wharf.

[3] Officers of C.S.N. were James Whitney, Jr. (president), [illegible] (vice president), S.O. Putnam (secretary), and the following trustees: Samuel J. Hensley, James Whitney, Jr., Alfred Redington, William Norris, Richard M. Jessup, Benjamin M. Hartshorne, John Bensley, C. F. Lowe, and S.O. [illegible]dock. Agents in various inland California cities included Sacramento (Alfred Redington and William H. Taylor), Marysville (G.P. [illegible]), Red Bluff (J.B. Andruse), and Stockton (Arthur Cornwall). In San Francisco a large staff was maintained.

[4] "California Gold and the Civil War," [illegible], *The Numismatist*, February 1962, p. 176.

[5] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. VII, 1860-1890, pp. 276 ff.

[6] Certain information is from Benjamin Franklin Gilbert, "San Francisco Harbor Defense During the Civil War," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, September 1954, pp. 229 ff.

[7] *Hutchings' California Magazine*, July 1859.

[8] *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush*, pp. [illegible]. [illegible] described his life and voluminous [illegible] in California, which he *finally* reached on August 6, 1849 after an especially long voyage delayed by headwinds off the west coast of South America, which sometimes had them "losing ground" every day. [illegible] August 22 [illegible] from San Francisco.

First: "Is a bat a bird?"

Second: "Does not whiskey preserve some men while it kills off others?"

Third: "Is sluicing preferable to drifting where it is 20 feet to the bed rock?"

These questions we have discussed without coming to any just conclusion and agreed last night to refer them to the Bucksport Lyceum. Please answer by return mail.

I have been reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It is a thorough abolition story and will not find much favor here as a large proportion are from slave states and would kill an abolitionist at sight....

Col. George Wright

During the 1861-1865 conflict, military affairs in California were under the direction of Colonel (later Brigadier General) George Wright, who did an admirable job of keeping the state isolated from the bloody realities of war that resulted in more than a million casualties in the East and Midwest. In 1865 Wright would loom large in the annals of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* as the most famous passenger aboard her final voyage.

Wright, a West Point graduate, went on to a distinguished military career. On October 20, 1861, he succeeded Maj. General Edwin V. Sumner in the command of the Federal Department of the Pacific, and was sworn in on the 26th of the same month.[1] Communications with the West were not always timely, and it was not until November 19 that Col. Wright was placed in full charge. Earlier in the year, on July 25, 1861, Major General John Charles Frémont, he of western exploration and one-time presidential candidate (1856) fame, was charged with the operation of the Western Department (at St. Louis, Missouri), but his actions in the post proved to be very controversial. It was felt by some—including President Abraham Lincoln—that certain of Frémont's proclamations were beyond his authority. Fremont and his wife Jessie, with strong ties to California, lived in San Francisco in the early 1860s.[2]

Col. George Wright remained in command of the federal interests on the West Coast during the Civil War, avoided controversy and generally received good marks from everyone. On July 1, 1864, he was relieved by Major General of Volunteers Irvin McDowell. On December 19 of the same year Wright was brevetted brigadier general "for long, faithful, and meritorious service." Thanks in large part to Wright, during the Civil War the city San Francisco was largely immune from injury or harmful consequences.

Rumors of Confederate Attacks

The first call in California for troops to support the Union resulted in five companies formed within the First Regiment of Cavalry from August 15 to October 31, 1861.[3] As the war progressed, additional units were formed.

In the summer of 1861 fears were expressed for the security of the naval facilities at Mare Island, the depot in San Francisco Bay for large quantities of ammunition. There were no soldiers on guard duty there, and security depended upon two civilian watchmen. On December 31 of the same year, Col. George Wright requested that a defense plan for San Francisco be drawn up, and added that Oregon and the Territory of Washington were likewise vulnerable in the event of enemy attack.

On January 11, 1862, Wright wrote to Leland Stanford, governor of the state, commenting on defense needs:

> In case of a war with a maritime nation, the immediate attention of the enemy would most certainly be directed to this city, the great entrepôt of our possessions on the Pacific Coast. To prevent the ingress of ships of war, we have the forts at Fort Point and on Alcatraz Island with 140 heavy guns now in position at commanding points. Batteries can readily be thrown up, and with such naval force as could be concentrated in the harbor, it is believed this city would be safe....

In 1862, Confederate Brigadier General Henry H. Sibley, who earlier had been a major with the United States Army, traveled from the rebel capital of Richmond to San Antonio, to enlist Texas sympathizers to participate in the conquest of the New Mexico Territory.[4] Once that had been accomplished, plans called for conquering Arizona and California, and then to proceed into the north Mexican states of Chihuahua, Sonora and Lower California. The Golden State would be a rich prize for the Confederacy, which was becoming increasingly short of funds for military purchases. The North was swimming in gold at the time, while the South had very little.

Word of Sibley's ambitious plans reached George Wright in California, including information that the Confederates might proceed into Sonora on the pretext of pursuing hostile Indians. Accordingly, he wrote on May 1, 1862, to Ignacio Pesqueria, the governor of Sonora, to assure him that federal troops would protect his state against any such invasion.

[1] Sumner had commanded the U.S. Army Department of the Pacific since April 25, 1861, when he relieved Albert Sidney Johnston, whose loyalties to the Union were under a cloud of justified suspicion, for he soon decamped to the South and joined the Confederate movement.

[2] John Charles Fremont was born in Savannah, Georgia, on January 13, 1813. He served in the United States Navy for a time, after which he became a second lieutenant in the United States Topographical Corps, which was busy surveying proposed routes for railroads. In 1841 he married Jessie Benton, daughter of the prominent Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton, a match which the Benton family resisted and considered very favorable for him, less so for her, especially in view of her young age (17), beauty, charms, and many admirers. He first crossed the Rocky Mountains in 1842, and after that time became indelibly identified with the West. In the 1840s he was in California, and after the War with Mexico (1846) claimed the territory in the name of the United States. After California became a state he served as a U.S. senator. In 1856 he was a candidate for president and was billed as "the people's choice," but the populace did not respond in kind. In 1878-1881 he was governor of Arizona Territory. Frémont died in New York on July 13, 1890.

[3] Leo P. Kibby, "California Soldiers in the Civil War," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, December 1961, pp. 343 ff., is the source for certain information relating to troops of the state.

[4] W.H. Watford, "The Far Western Wing of the Rebellion, 1861-1865," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, June 1955, pp. 131, 134, and 136.

Reports and speculations were rampant concerning Confederate threats to California from several directions, including possible invasion by sea as well as by land. Also ever-present was the possibility that overland stage and mail routes and telegraph lines would fall to the enemy. Many patriotic California men wanted to go to the East and engage in battle, but the War Department would not allow this. However, a compromise was made when the state of Massachusetts, eager to fill its enlistment quota, was allowed to recruit about 500 men in California and have them travel east, these soldiers becoming the only Californians to actually see combat.[1]

On March 16, 1862, martial law was declared in San Francisco following more rumors, later proved to be unfounded, that an attack by Confederate troops was imminent. In April further rumors circulated to the effect that local citizens sympathetic to the secessionists' cause were planning to attack and seize the federal powder magazine at Mare Island. The *Active,* a government steamer that had been engaged in surveying the coast, was stationed off the southern end of the island to keep watch.

In the first week of September 1862, news of Union losses under Major General John Pope caused a wave of public sympathy in San Francisco, far from the scene of the action.[2] One public-spirited citizen pledged $6,000 toward the relief of sick and wounded soldiers, setting in motion a widespread appeal to the citizens leading to a resolution by the Board of Supervisors on September 8. Subscription rolls were posted, and the response was overwhelming:

> There was a widespread generous rivalry to out-do each other in noble giving. The fervor of charity spread into every class of the people, into every business and station in life. There was no nation represented here, whether American, English, German, French, Italian, Chinese, Russian, or Hungar an, from whose representatives most worthy gifts did not come; no sect in religion that did not find its adherents coming into the ranks of this noble army of givers. The Christians gave as sympathizers with the suffering, the Jews gave with unbounded loyalty and liberality, heretics gave as citizens of a Republic to be saved, and men of no religion gave with generous self-forgetfulness.
>
> Rich men and poor widows, the little children in the schools and the employees of the U.S. government, of large firms and incorporated companies denied themselves alike for the sake of the bleeding soldiers.... At the end of one week...under direction of the committee, sent by telegraph was the sum of $100,000 to the president and treasurer of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in New York.... The work of the committee in this city was still vigorously pursued and by the steamer of October 1st, another sum, $100,000, was sent to the U.S. Sanitary Commission.

Freedom of the Press Suspended

In the meantime Col. George Wright acted on September 5, 1862, to suppress the widespread circulation of several California newspapers which had been printing anti-Union, pro-Confederacy editorials and articles, or which were otherwise against the policies of the federal government.[3] No longer could certain papers be sent by mail, this being their main method of distribution beyond local areas.

The *Equal Rights Expositor* (published in Visalia, Tulare County) was found to be especially offensive by Wright. In response that particular journal commented:

> This act of despotism has by no means astonished us. We have waited in weekly expectation of it ever since we commenced our labors. A free press has never yet been tolerated by any power that conspired against the liberties of the people. Will anyone now dare say they live under a free government, that thus outrages the liberties of the press and of free speech?... Men who will continue their support of such a government steeped in infamy as it is, are fit only for slaves.

Indeed, by any reckoning freedom of the press had been suspended. The prohibition of the use of the federal mails was extended in 1862-1863 to other newspapers as well, including the Stockton *Argus,* the San Jose *Tribune,* the Stockton *Democrat,* and the Placerville *Mountain Democrat.* The restriction wreaked financial hardship on the journals involved. Loyal readers came to the fore, and the *Equal Rights Expositor* was sustained by contributions of more than $300 from sympathetic ladies in Tulare County. In gratitude the paper printed this tribute praising the local "southern" girls, while those in the north (such as in San Francisco) could not compare:

THE GIRLS OF TULARE

Hurrah for the matrons and maids of Tulare,
Their hearts are as brave, as their faces fair;
They are as warm and as bright as their own sunny clime,
That land that they love, with devotion sublime;
Oh who in the gloomy north can compare?
With our own southern girls, the girls of Tulare?

Toward the End of the War

Notwithstanding certain pro-Confederacy sentiment in California, nationwide the movement to help injured Union soldiers continued, culminating in 1864 with many Sanitary Fairs held in the East and Midwest, the proceeds of which were given to the loyal troops.

The Civil War's effects on San Francisco were not without light moments, or at least events that seem humorous in retrospect, such as this caper of December 24, 1864:[4]

> Some unprincipled parties published a spurious extra, purporting to be issued from the *Alta* and *Bulletin* offices, giving an account of the capture of Richmond. Several hundred

[1] Of these troops, 86 died in service, 34 deserted the Union Army, and 1? were reported missing.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, pp. 27-28, retrospective account.

[3] Benjamin Franklin Gilbert, "The Confederate Minority in California," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, June 1941, p. 162.

[4] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, p. 21.

dollars' worth were sold by the newsboys before the hoax was discovered and the principals arrested.

The war continued on, and on. Accounts of military actions in the East and Midwest were constantly carried in the newspapers. Locally, soldiers trained as part of large federal units and also with smaller groups in the home guard. The Department of the Pacific oversaw the various operations and in 1864 was comprised of five military districts: District of Oregon, District of California, District of Utah, District of Southern California, and District of Humboldt.[1]

In 1864 a lengthy listing of smaller San Francisco companies within the Department of the Pacific and California Militia as well as independent units included these, often bringing together men of related ethnic backgrounds:

> First Regiment Infantry, First California Artillery Regiment, Second Infantry (Irish) Regiment, Sixth Infantry (German) Regiment, First Regiment Cavalry, First California Guard (Light Battery), City Guard, National Guard, Washington Guard, San Francisco Hussars, California Fusiliers, First Light Dragoons, Light Guard, McMahon Grenadier Guards, Montgomery Guards, Union Guards, Franklin Light Infantry, Ellsworth Guard Zouaves, Sigel Rifles, State Guard, Sumner Light Guard, Ellsworth Rifles, Shields Guard, Wolf Tone Guard, Meagher Guard, Emmett Life Guards, McClellan Guard, San Francisco Guard (Independent), Jackson Dragoons, Police Military Organization (Independent), O'Neil Guard, Ellis Guard, Columbian Guard, San Francisco Cadets, Pacific Guard, Butchers' Dragoons, Sumner Guard Cadets, California Grenadiers Company D, Steuben Guard Company E, San Francisco Tirolleurs Company F, Germania Guard Company G, California Musketeers Company H, San Francisco Yagers Company I, and Fitted Zouaves Company J.

While protecting the home front was the avowed purpose of these companies, often their gatherings would end in carousing and drunken revelry. In the absence of any *real* Confederate enemy troops in the area, a good time was had by all!

The *J.M. Chapman* Caper

During the early 1860s the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* and other vessels in the coastwise trade were under constant threat of attack by Confederate raiders, real or imagined. No one knew the plans of the Confederate Navy on the open seas and there was great apprehension and anxiety concerning the danger.

Historian Hubert Howe Bancroft wrote:[2]

> Many fears were entertained on both sides of the continent that Confederate cruisers would capture some of the mail steamers [illegible] before the close of the war [illegible] and dispatches were received in April [illegible] the shipment of gold [illegible] was suspended.

As events developed, there was, indeed, cause for alarm.

In early 1863 a conspiracy developed under the nose of Gen. George Wright and the California home guard.

Ridgely Greathouse, a banker in Yreka, California, a man of considerable means, secured the capital to buy the a fast sailing clipper-schooner, the *J.M. Chapman*, which had arrived in San Francisco from New York in February. His plan was to outfit it with arms (including six Dahlgren guns) and provisions for use as a Confederate raider. Included in Greathouse's purchases were two lethal brass cannons with rifled bores firing 12-pound shot, complete with a stock of powder and shells.

So as not to attract attention, Greathouse said that he was acting on behalf of the Liberal Party political faction in Mexico, and had the arms and ammunition packed in crates marked "oil mill" and "machinery." The government affairs in Mexico were in a turmoil during the era, and it was not unusual for soldiers of fortune to take the side of one faction or another.

To further distract notice and curiosity seekers, an announcement was made that the ship was loading freight for shipment to Manzanillo, Mexico. Fake manifests were drawn up to aid in the deception. Other supplies including oaths of loyalty to the Confederacy for the crewmen, uniforms of the type generally worn by naval personnel, and sailing plans were carefully hidden on board. Albert Rubery, an Englishman, helped formulate the conspiracy. Another one of the conspirators, Asbury Harpending, had gone to the Confederate capital in Richmond and had obtained from President Jefferson Davis a letter of marque authorizing him in the name of the Confederacy to burn, bond, or capture any vessel belonging to citizens of the United States (the Union).[4]

William C. Law,[5] a California captain who had assisted with the purchase arrangements for the ship, was to command the vessel, although Greathouse held the "captain" title. Lumber was taken aboard to make berths and prison rooms for sailors and passengers that the crew hoped to capture.

The grandiose plan called for the *J.M. Chapman* to depart San Francisco, head to Manzanillo on the coast of Mexico, off-load the sham cargo (alternatively, to throw it overboard once the ship cleared San Francisco Bay and was in the Pacific Ocean), go to Guadalupe, an island about 200 miles off the coast of Mexico, for the installation of arms and fixtures, and to return to Manzanillo. At the latter port

[1] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 570, gives lists of officers, divisions, etc.

[2] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, pp. 283-284.

[3] Sources include William Morrison Robinson, Jr., *The Confederate Privateers*, 1928, pp. 279 ff.; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, pp. 287-288; Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. IV, pp. 342 ff.; The *Alta California*, April 10 and 17, 1863.

[4] This letter was signed by Davis and made out in *blank*, allowing Harpending to fill it out as he saw fit, a rare procedure (cf. Robinson, p. 280); it was further related that Harpending made part of the journey to and from Richmond overland "on horseback across the great plains of the West").

[5] Surname spelled Low in some accounts; Robinson uses Law.

the other men aboard the ship were to have their names added to the Confederate letter of marque, after which they would become authorized pirates.

The first target was to be a gold-laden steamship, the well-known *S.S. Oregon*, en route from San Francisco to Panama. This vessel was to be captured, outfitted with the guns from the *Chapman*, and converted to a Confederate raider to attack and ravage a second treasure ship. The crew and passengers of both steamers were to be put ashore in Mexico to fend for themselves. At that point the *J.M. Chapman*, with gold coins and other treasure from two or even three steamers transferred aboard, was to go to the Mexican coast to the spot near Manzanillo where the *S.S. Golden Gate* had sunk with its treasure earlier,[1] and pick up more gold. At that point the *J.M. Chapman*, with millions of dollars in gold stowed in its hold, planned to go to the Chincha Islands off the coast of Peru,[2] capture and burn the American commercial vessels believed to be there, and then escape to the distant China Sea, continue westward to the Indian Ocean, finally crossing the Atlantic, to arrive in a Confederate harbor in the southeast United States. After that time, Greathouse, Rubery, Harpending, and the others could live happily ever after as wealthy, honored men in the Confederate States of America.

Indeed, gold from the captured steamers would be of extraordinary value and importance to the rebel cause. Unfortunately for the state of Confederate finances, the South was woefully short of precious metal, while the North remained awash in a golden tide amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars. On international markets the pirated gold could buy for the Confederacy just about any war supplies needed.

Another account of the *J.M. Chapman* had it that the pirates would go to the neutral port of Vancouver, British Columbia—instead of to Mexico—to divide the spoils taken from treasure ships.[3] If the latter plan had been effective, no doubt the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* might have been on the endangered list of steamers.

In its final form, the plot called for additional Confederate sympathizers on the West Coast to be enlisted to the cause, for the federal arsenal at Benicia to be seized along with other fortifications, and "to declare California out of the Union, and one of the Confederate states."

All was in readiness on March 15 to implement the daring plan, one that would forever enshrine the planners as Confederate heroes. The crew came aboard as did 15 to 17 other Confederate sympathizers who were armed with pistols and bowie knives and given hiding places below deck in cramped quarters among crates of freight.

There were, however, a few unforeseen problems. The *J.M. Chapman*'s new skipper, Captain Low, was staggering drunk when he came aboard. Moreover, there was scarcely a breeze to fill the sails. Further, the conspirators were completely unaware that all along their conniving was known to federal authorities.

No sooner had the ship left the dock and started to hoist its mainsail, than the *U.S.S. Cyane*, a Union man-of-war, came alongside and arrested the perpetrators, including the stowed-away sympathizers who were revealed when a hatch cover was lifted. No meaningful resistance was given, and all were arrested. The ship and its cargo were seized, taken to the federal facility on Alcatraz Island, and subsequently sold as prizes of war.[4] Among the items found were many incriminating documents and papers, mostly in Harpending's hand.

On October 13, 1863, the leaders—Greathouse, Rubery, and Harpending—were tried, found guilty, fined $10,000 each, and sentenced to 10 years in jail. As it turned out, they remained behind bars for only a short time. Rubery was released on January 20, 1864, under a pardon from President Lincoln arranged through one of Rubery's English friends, John Bright. Greathouse, primary organizer of the attempt, was released the following February 15 after taking the oath prescribed in Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation. Harpending followed suit on March 3.

Asbury Harpending made headlines a few years later in 1872 when he and others spread the marvelous news that a vast field of rare gemstones had been found in the Sierras, such lode including a king's ransom in diamonds, rubies, and emeralds.[5] Samples were sent to Tiffany & Co. in New York City for verification, and the stones were pronounced genuine.

In private meetings, hundreds of these uncut gems were spread before the amazed eyes of San Francisco capitalists, who were all too eager to pony up hundreds of thousands of dollars to get in on the bonanza, the best thing since the discovery of gold in California and the finding of silver and gold in the Comstock Lode in Nevada! However, storm clouds arose on the sunny prospect, and soon thereafter an accomplished geologist who had studied the alleged gem

[1] The S.S. *Golden Gate*, a 2,200 ton steamer built by William H. Webb in New York in 1850, could accommodate 800 passengers. On July 27, 1862, as part of the fleet of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co., on the route from San Francisco to Panama, she was off the coast of Manzanillo, Mexico. Fire burst out in the engine room, and within minutes much of the ship was engulfed in flames. The captain steered her toward shore, but not in time for an estimated 198 (Heyl) to 223 (Kemble) passengers and crew members whose lives were lost, mostly to the fire. [illegible] The treasure, variously estimated as being worth $1,400,000 to $1,500,000, was lost, along with the mail and other cargo.

[2] A small group of islands best known for the deposits of guano (bird manure) accumulated over centuries, [illegible] facilities for the provisioning of ships.

[3] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, p. 288.

[4] The *Chapman* account verifies that truth can be more amazing than fiction! What an adventure story this would make.

[5] Harpending's autobiography, *The Great Diamond Hoax and Other Stirring Episodes in the Life of Asbury Harpending*, edited by James H. Wilkins, was published in San Francisco in 1913.

field earlier and knew that there were no diamond-bearing areas in the region, made known his opinion. Matters were not helped by another study which revealed that the diamonds were of *African* origin. How strange! The scheme fell apart. The investors had been hoodwinked, and for good measure Harpending, the central figure in the matter, said that he had been misled as well. Some of San Francisco's most important "money men" were quite embarrassed for a long time afterward.

More Plots and Privateers

The *Chapman* affair was no sooner ended, than another maritime plot was unearthed, this one nearly as grandiose (if that is possible!). Confederate sympathizers in California met secretly and laid plans to raise a force of 200 men. The first order of operation was to seize a government steamship in Napa Creek, and use it as a raider to go through San Francisco Bay to Vallejo, take over the government installation there and steal guns and ammunition. Once this was accomplished, the next step was to attack and capture the city of San Francisco in the name of the Confederacy.[1]

In still another incident, on December 12, 1863, the *U.S.S. Narragansett*, a steam gunboat, left San Francisco and sailed along the route of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, northward to Puget Sound, to investigate reports that Confederate privateers were being fitted out in the neutral port of Victoria.[2] After prowling around coastal and inland waters and not finding any obvious rebels, the man-of-war returned to San Francisco on February 11.

In the same year, 1863, a few rumors circulated in the Los Angeles area in southern California that Santa Catalina Island had been pinpointed by the Confederacy for use as a base for marauding privateers.[3] Moreover, miners on the island were said to be sympathetic to the rebel cause and were simply waiting to make their allegiance known and help the Confederacy. Later historians wrote that Colonel George Wright took notice of the matter, and in January 1864 federal troops were dispatched to secure the offshore location. All settlers on the island were ordered to leave by February 1, and no new arrivals were permitted. However, the Confederate connection had no basis in fact.

It later developed that Col. Wright was interested in Santa Catalina as a detention or reservation area for troublesome natives.[4] He hoped to force Klamath, Redwood, and Trinity Indians who were living in the northern districts, but who were constantly wandering off the limits set for them, to relocate to the island. Wright envisioned that the Indians, more than two dozen miles off the coast, would be easier for the government to manage and for lower cost. He was aware that the remote island offered a good climate, excellent soil for pasturage and farming, and abundant fish in the nearby waters. However, authorities in Washington, D.C., nixed the plan, stating that the Indians could be better controlled if they stayed on the mainland. On September 14, 1864, the last Army occupation troops left Santa Catalina.

The C.S.S. Alabama

On February 10, 1864, the San Francisco *Call* warned its readers of the latest Confederate threat: the approach to the city of the Anglo-Chinese Fleet, which had been purchased by the rebels, escorted by the notorious raider, the *C.S.S. Alabama*, would surely bring war this time.

The saga of the *Alabama* is one of the most exciting and controversial in the annals of the Civil War. Built by Laird & Sons on the Mersey River near Liverpool, England, as the *290*, 1,040-ton steamship was driven by a screw propeller and was also rigged as a bark. She was taken to a rendezvous in the Atlantic, secretly transferred to the Confederate States of America, and under Captain Raphael Semmes became the foremost terror of the Atlantic in the Civil War. Dozens of Union ships were laid to waste.

The crew of the *Alabama* would sail under the British flag (per some accounts), capture a Union vessel, then raise the Confederate flag in triumph. Semmes became a military hero in the South, the paradigm of a dashing adventurer. In June 1864 the *Alabama* was in the neutral port of Cherbourg, France. At the same time the American gunboat *Kearsarge*, under Captain John A. Winslow, was in Flushing, Holland, on the same coast. Winslow was notified by telegram from the American ambassador to France, that the *Alabama* was at Cherbourg. Around the same time, Captain Semmes and the crew of the *Alabama* learned of the location of the *Kearsarge*. Through the diplomatic service Captain Semmes challenged the *Kearsarge*, stating that he would like to measure the strength of the *Alabama* against her, and would do so if the *Kearsarge* would remain outside of the port of Cherbourg. Such an encounter would not long detain the *Kearsarge*, Semmes boldly suggested.

Semmes was wrong, not on the brevity part, but on who would measure whom and with what success.

The *Alabama* sank.[5]

The alarm raised by the San Francisco *Call* article not-

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII. 1860-1890, p. 288.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 13, retrospective of events.

[3] Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., "The Occupation of Santa Catalina Island During the Civil War," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, December 1967, pp. 345 ff.

[4] As pointed out by Kornweibel, the *Alta California* stated in an editorial on January 6, 1864, that the government's intention was to use Catalina Island as an Indian reservation. The same writer noted that later historians picked up and magnified the alleged Confederate intentions, while virtually ignoring Wright's hope to colonize the island with Indians.

[5] The story of the *Alabama* has been recounted in many Civil War histories. A precis appears in Bowers, *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997.

withstanding, the closest brush the *Alabama* had with California history occurred on December 7, 1862, and only tangentially. While off the coast of Cuba on its way to Panama, the *S.S. Ariel,* a 252-foot, 1,736-ton ship, was stopped by the *Alabama.* Captain Semmes decided to spare the *Ariel,* but to disarm 120 marines who were aboard and take what money he could find. While busy with the *Ariel,* the *Alabama* missed capturing the *S.S. Champion* which was traveling the same route, but northbound, with $1,350,000 in California gold treasure aboard.

Loyalty Oath

In 1864, Captain Samuel J. DeWolf of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* swore an oath of loyalty to the United States, this in view of the continuing threat of Confederate privateers off the West Coast and the ever-looming possibility of invasion. After all, the Union could not be too careful, what with various conspiracies coming to light:[1]

> I, S.J. DeWolf, master of the Steamship *Brother Jonathan* of San Francisco, do solemnly swear that I will support, protect and defend the Constitution and government of the United States against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign, and that I will bear true faith, allegiance, and loyalty to the same, any ordinance, resolution or law of any state convention or legislature to the contrary notwithstanding; and further, that I do this with a full determination, pledge and purpose, without any mental reservation or evasion whatsoever; and, further, that I will well and faithfully perform the duties which may be required of me by law. So help me God.
>
> [signed] S.J. DeWolf.
>
> Subscribed and sworn to before me this 8th day of December A.D. 1864.
>
> [signed] W.W. Parker.

The Raider *C.S.S. Shenandoah*

While California-based raiders for the rebel side never became a reality, on the open sea the *C.S.S. Shenandoah* was a fact of life, an actual threat. She was one of the most notorious of the Confederate raiders and the only one active in Pacific Ocean waters off the West Coast. During the summer of 1865 she struck fear into the hearts of sea captains and their crews. Every trip of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was conducted with the possibility that the rebel marauder might heave into view.

The *Shenandoah* was built in Glasgow, Scotland, by Alexander Stephens & Sons, and was launched on August 17, 1863, as the *Sea King.* Her hull was iron, planked with rock elm below the water line and teak above. The three-masted ship was fully rigged with sails, but had a powerful two-cylinder[2] steam engine slightly aft of amidships which drove a propeller via a long shaft. She was 220 feet long (the same length as the *Brother Jonathan*), had a beam of 32 feet, five inches,[3] and was registered as 1,018 tons. In service, steam propulsion was employed primarily, with the sails providing auxiliary power when wind conditions were favorable.

Her first trip was on behalf of the British government, when she took troops and munitions to New Zealand. Upon her return she attracted the attention of agents for the Confederate States of America, and secret arrangements were consummated for her purchase for £45,000. In keeping with similar situations, officials in England later denied any knowledge of such goings on. At the time England was officially neutral, but in actuality the country furnished a wide market for Confederate bonds and obligations, some of which were actually printed in pound-sterling denominations. Before the war, the cotton of the American South was an essential raw material for the textile mills of Great Britain, and during the war it was believed by many Britishers that the Confederacy was of more value to England than was the Union. Unofficial help to the rebels took many forms, including the construction of ships (under various false pretenses with the names of sham owners given) and even sending experienced engravers to the Confederate states to prepare plates to print paper money.

Under the guise of being a British merchant ship owned by a straw man named Richard Wright, she was soon transferred to another owner, P.L. Corbett, who announced that the vessel was going to sail to Bombay to load a cargo of tea aboard.

In reality, she was sent south to the port of Funchal on the island of Madeira, off the coast of North Africa.[4] A tender, the British steamer *Laurel,* went to the same destination, carrying armament (eight guns) and ammunition for installation aboard the *Sea King.* At Funchal she was renamed the *Shenandoah.* The smokestack for the boilers could be lowered, thus making her appear as a sails-only ship, disguising her ability to proceed forward at nine knots per hour in a calm sea.

On October 18, 1864, Lieutenant James Iredale Waddell took the helm, and on October 23 the Confederate flag was hoisted.[6] Most of the men who had sailed from England as part of the deception—some of whom had been aboard the *C.S.S. Alabama* under Raphael Semmes—were now hesitant to sign on as crew. Only 20 men went aboard the rebel ship, while 42 others were put ashore at Tenerife by the *Laurel.* The intended crew complement was 73 men.

[1] From the original preserved in the Clatsop County (Oregon) Historical Museum.

[2] Each cylinder had a 3[illegible]" diameter and operated with a [illegible] stroke.

[3] Or 36 feet; accounts vary.

[4] *The Oregon Reporter,* August 4, 1865 (retrospective accounts and editorial comments, this issue also contained news of the *Brother Jonathan*); *Harper's Weekly,* December 16, 1865; Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies,* A.B.C. Whipple, *The Whalers,* Philip Van Doren Stern, *The Confederate Navy,* and other sources.

[5] Or October 19; accounts differ.

[6] Waddell, from North Carolina, had served in the United States Navy before the war.

The *Shenandoah*, the famous Confederate raider that struck terror into the hearts of ship crews in the Pacific Ocean in 1865. She is shown at anchor in the Mersey River, Liverpool, at the conclusion of her marauding career. (*Harper's Weekly,* December 16, 1865)

Upon arrival on land the reluctant sailors claimed that the *Sea King* had been wrecked, and that they had been rescued as castaways on Las Desertas Island. The *London Times*, November 27, 1864, included this account, which differs in some details from the preceding:

> On Monday afternoon a notice was posted at Lloyd's announcing the loss of the *Sea King* screw steamship on the rocks near Desert Isles, off Funchal, in the Island of Madeira. This is the steamer that is believed to have been taken up for the service of Captain Semmes, late of the *Alabama*. She was a fine new vessel, built on the Clyde last year, and made the voyage to China and returned to London two or three months since with a valuable cargo of the first of the season's tea. She cleared out from London on a voyage to, as stated, Bombay, and it is rumoured that the *Laurel* steamer was dispatched out with stores and men to meet her.
>
> The African mail steamer *Calabar*, which arrived in the early part of last week, had on board 46 men who had refused to serve in the *Sea King*, which was reported to have had her name changed to *Shenandoah*, and had hoisted the Confederate flag, and that Captain Semmes had been pointed out as commander of the steamer. The intelligence of her loss has come from Gibraltar, a newspaper of that place announcing that the *Sea King*, Captain Corbett, had been wrecked near the Desert Isles, and that some of the crew had been picked up in two boats. It is thought not impossible, however, that some mistake may have been made as to the picking up of the boats and the fate of the ship. The reported wreck of the steamer and the rescue of the boats may be another version of the story of the men who left and came home in the *Calabar*. The *Sea King* is stated to have been insured for upwards of £50,000.

On October 19 the armed *C.S.S. Shenandoah* began her career as a raider. To Captain Waddell and his crew, any ship bearing the American flag was fair prey to be captured, ransacked, and sunk. Falling as the first victim was the bark *Alina* out of Searsport, Maine, which was ransacked and scuttled on October 30. Several other vessels met the same fate soon thereafter including the *Charter Oak* (November 5), *D. Godfrey* (November 8), *Susan* (November 10), *Kate Prince* and *Adelaide* (November 12), and *Lizzie M. Stacey* (November 13).

Seeking to open new territory and naval presence for the Confederacy, the *Shenandoah* headed for the Pacific Ocean. On her way to the Cape of Good Hope on December 4 she encountered the *Edward*, a whaler out of New Bedford. Her stores were plundered, her crew taken off and put aboard the *Shenandoah* in chains, and the ship was set afire. On December 29 the *Delphine* fell victim. News traveled slowly at sea, and as the marauder continued eastward, few American ships in the sea knew of the potential danger facing them.

On January 25, 1865, the *Shenandoah* reached Melbourne, Australia. There she was reprovisioned and had her propeller repaired, after which she headed to the northern reaches of the Pacific in search of whaling and fishing fleets. On the way, on April 1, she came into Lea Harbor in the Ascension Islands, flying the Union *Stars and Stripes*. Drawing close to her adversaries the raider took down the

American flag, ran up the Confederate insignia, and proceeded to capture four whalers, the *Edward Cary*, the *Harvest*, the *Hector*, and the *Pearl*. The native king of the islands, Ish-Y-Paw greeted the Confederate ship with a friendly delegation aboard 70 war canoes and was presented with 70 muskets by Captain Waddell. The raiders took what they wanted from the ships including valuable charts and plans showing where the American whaling fleet planned to rendezvous in the North Pacific. Waddell then invited the natives to help themselves to anything else, after which the ships were burned.

On May 27, the *Abigail*, out of New Bedford, was captured and yielded a special prize: 25 large barrels of whiskey, which the crew of the *Shenandoah* took aboard "to be used in case of sickness," according to one of the ship's officers. The booty turned out to be a Trojan horse, for soon thereafter, much of the raider's crew was in a stupor, many men were locked in the forecastle to sober up and others were put in irons, and it was some time until the crew recovered sufficiently in order to resume operations.[1] More sobering was the defection of 17 men from the *Abigail's* crew of 36, including Second Mate Thomas Manning. Captain Waddell designated Manning as a corporal of marines in the Confederate Navy.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away the Civil War was coming to an end. On the next day Richmond, the Confederate capital, was evacuated. On April 9, the conflict was officially over.

Unaware of such events, on April 14 the *Shenandoah* departed the Eastern Caroline Islands and headed toward the Kurile Islands in the North Pacific. On the same day, President and Mrs. Lincoln attended the performance of *Our American Cousin*, by Laura Keene, in Ford's Theatre, Washington.

The *Milo* on whaling duty in the Arctic in the summer of 1865. Captured by the *C.S.S. Shenandoah*, the *Milo* was spared from destruction and was used to transport over 200 captured seamen to San Francisco. Included were at least four sailors who would play a part in the saga of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. (Detail from painting in the New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, MA)

On June 22, while Americans were rejoicing in peace, the *Shenandoah* captured three whalers in the Bering Sea between Russia and Alaska, the *Euphrates*, *William Thompson*, and the *Milo*, the latter being spared for use to accommodate the many captured seamen that were simply too much for the *Shenandoah* to carry. Typically, the raider would have its smokestack lowered out of sight so as to appear as a merchant sailing ship or even a whaler, would fly false colors, draw near to her intended victim, fire up its boilers, raise the smokestack, then hoist the Confederate flag and bear her guns. The captured ships were set afire, lighting up the sea for miles around.

On the 23rd the *General Williams* was captured and burned, followed on the 24th by the *Jerah Swift*, *Sophia Thornton*, and *Susan Abigail*, which met the same fate.

June 26th was to set a record, but not for long, when the *Catharine*, *Gen. Pike*, *William C. Nye*, *Gipsey*, *Isabella*, and *Nimrod* fell prey, the *Gen. Pike* alone being spared from burning. On the 28th the *Shenandoah* laid waste to what amounted to a fleet in itself, the *Brunswick*, *Congress*, *Covington*, *Favorite*, *Hillman*, *Isaac Howland*, *James Murray*, *Martha*, *Nassau*, *Nile*, and *Waverly*, the *James Murray* being spared for use to accommodate the increased number of captive seamen.[2]

There was widespread fear in California that the *Shenandoah* would venture into the sea off of California where heavily-laden ships with valuable cargoes abounded. Although some coastwise vessels, including passenger steamers, carried light guns, most were unarmed. Theories abounded, and with justification, for Captain Waddell had learned from San Francisco papers found aboard the ravaged whaling vessels that "there was only one vessel guarding the harbor" of San Francisco. Emboldened, "he expected to ram [the single ship] at night and then command the city the next morning."[3]

Mentions of the danger posed by the raider were printed in San Francisco papers throughout the summer, including this poignant account in the *Alta California*, July 21, 1865. No doubt it was taken to heart by anyone who was intending to take a trip by sea on the *Brother Jonathan* or any other vessel:

[1] Foster Rhea Dulles, *Lowered Boats: A Chronicle of American Whaling*, 1933, p. 261.

[2] The *Brunswick* had been crippled earlier by [illegible] • Captain Thomas Young of the *Favorite* swore at the Confederate [illegible] and tried to shoot at the unwanted boarders, but his gun did not discharge. Later, Captain Waddell paid him the compliment of being "the bravest and most resolute man we captured during the cruise."

[3] Benjamin Franklin Gilbert, "San Francisco Harbor Defense During the Civil War," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, September 1954, p. [illegible]

The Pirate *Shenandoah* in the Arctic Ocean Destruction of Ships

Intense excitement was created in this port yesterday morning by the arrival of the whaleship *Milo,* from the whaling ground in the North Pacific, having on board, in addition to her crew, about 190 officers and men of the Pacific whaling fleet, from vessels which had been captured and burned by the rebel pirate *Shenandoah.*

It has been long suspected that this pirate would turn up in some safe water of the Pacific to prey on American commerce, as the last heard of her she had been into Melbourne, Australia, and was apparently preparing for a cruise of devilish destruction on our merchantmen.

Like a sneak in the night, she crawls about in fear and trembling of meeting a vessel which might have a gun or two on board, but as soon as satisfied there is no danger—only a peaceful whaleman—she hoists the flag of a friendly nation (in the Pacific Ocean the Russian flag), runs boldly down on the unarmed foe, runs up the rebel rag, and like a footpad with an unarmed traveler, raises the demand of "your money or your life," to "bring your ship to," seizes the officers and crew while the pirate's cannon are trained upon them, steals whatever is valuable, applies the match, and destroys the ship....

The rebel pirate appeared in June in the Okhotsk Sea, where she sneaked up on the barque *Abigail,* of New Bedford, Capt. Nye, captured her, stole whatever was valuable, fired the vessel, and steered for the Sea of Kamchatka, where she fell in with the ship *William Thompson,* of New Bedford, Capt. Smith, with 240 barrels of oil aboard. After ransacking the ship, as with the *Abigail,* she was fired and destroyed, the officers and crews being taken on board the pirate and confined in a hole below decks.

From thence she went to the Sea of Anadir, where she captured and burned several more New Bedford vessels. This was on the 21st of June, and between 11 o'clock on the morning of that day and the morning of the 23rd of June, she had captured and burned the following vessels, putting their officers and crews aboard the *Milo,* which was bonded.

Ship *Euphrates,* Captain Hathaway, of New Bedford.

Ship *Wm. Thompson,* Captain Frank Smith, of New Bedford.

Ship *Sophia Thornton,* Captain Tucker, of New Bedford.

Barque *Jireh Swift,* Captain Williams, of New Bedford, 400 barrels of oil aboard.

Ship *Milo,* of New Bedford, afterwards bonded....[1]

The editor of the *Alta California* commented in the same issue:

And why is it that we have no national vessels on this coast, no swift craft to go and chase down this pirate? What has become of the great American Navy, of which we have heard so much? Are the shores of the Pacific unworthy of protection? Does the secretary of the Navy know that San Francisco is the third if not the second seaport in the United States? We hear that certain splendid vessels are to be sent to Europe to show the people there what kind of ships we have, but did it not occur to the authorities in Washington that there is better use for ships of war than to be making an empty display?

Connected as San Francisco now is by telegraph with Washington, half a dozen large and swift war ships ought to be regularly stationed here, and this should be the point at which all the American squadrons in the Pacific should be commissioned.

When the *Milo* started for San Francisco, the newspapers given to the *Shenandoah* contained no news later than the 17th or 18th of April; but the *Susan Abigail,* with dates to the 10th of May or thereabouts, and news of the surrender of Johnston and Dick Taylor, was supposed to have fallen into the clutches of Captain Waddell, while the *Milo* was still in sight. There is room to hope, therefore, that he became convinced of the utter collapse of the rebellion, before destroying all the whalemen within his reach. We do not know where he obtained the idea he could continue hostilities for 90 days after the conclusion of peace. Such a course would bring him within the reach of British as well as of American hemp [rope for being hanged].

On August 10, 1865, this news account was datelined San Francisco:[2]

The whale ship *Europia* arrived last night from the Arctic Ocean. She reports having spoken,[3] the whaleships *Mount Wallston, Vineyard,* and *Wm. Gifford,* all bound south, endeavoring to escape from the pirate *Shenandoah.*

Years later the reminiscences of Caspar T. Hopkins included this:[4]

I have before alluded to the arrival of the *Milo* with the crews of the whale ships burned by the *Shenandoah.* Of course the news of these depredations on our commerce created intense excitement among seafaring men. There was then no U.S. man-of-war in port or on the coast. But the new and fast Pacific Mail Steamship Company's steamer *Colorado* had just arrived from New York. Hundreds of volunteers were anxious to man this vessel if the government would charter and arm her and furnish the officers to go out in pursuit of the *Shenandoah.*

At the public meeting held at the Merchants' Exchange I was appointed a committee of one to go to Mare Island and endeavor to induce Commodore McDougal, who commanded the Navy Yard, to represent the government in the matter. I found the old commodore both willing and ready to do all that we asked, but he could not move without orders from Washington, and the wires were again down (a frequent occurrence in those days) so that nothing could be or was done in the matter. This interview occurred on Saturday, July 22, 1865.

Reported sightings and rumors concerning the *Shenandoah* continued, and on August 4th the *Sacramento Daily Bee* printed a report of a mysterious ship seen near Puget Sound, said by the British consul to be the English

[1] In lieu of having the ship destroyed, the officers promised to pay the Confederate States of America the sum of $46,000 "upon recognition of the independence of the southern Confederacy."

[2] Reprinted in *The Oregon Reporter,* August 12, 1865 (this issue also contained news about the *Brother Jonathan*).

[3] To speak a ship: a nautical phrase referring to the communication by voice horn by a crew member of one ship across a short distance of water to the crew member of another. The typical speaking was meant to determine the name of the ship and her registry (if this was not obvious from signs and pennants), her destination, and, perhaps, to exchange news, the latter if the ships were meeting while coming from opposite directions. When one ship spoke another, the event was entered in the logs of both.

[4] "The California Recollections of Caspar T. Hopkins," *California Historical Society Quarterly,* Vol. XXVI, No. 4, December 1947. Hopkins was in the insurance business and in 1866 became president of the California Insurance Company. In the same era he was a very popular church organist in San Francisco.

warship *Mutine.* However, not all agreed: "Some of our shipping men, however, think it was the *Shenandoah.*"

As if the accounts of the end of the war already received by Captain Waddell aboard the *Shenandoah* were not convincing enough, on August 2 the Confederate raider encountered the British bark (out of Liverpool) *Baracouta,* which had left the Golden Gate 13 days earlier, and learned that the war had ended on April 9, according to accounts in San Francisco newspapers. Once again Waddell discounted the news, stating that as it came from the enemy it might be false. However, he soon reconsidered, abandoned his plans for his attack on San Francisco, and headed to a neutral country, fearing that Americans might shoot him on sight as a pirate, in view of the vast destruction he wrought after the war was over.

On September 1, 1865, the *New York Times* printed a bulletin datelined San Francisco, August 29, noting: "The war steamer *Saranac* sailed from Asminalt, British Columbia, on the 23rd inst., in pursuit of the *Shenandoah.*"

Waddell and his crew continued sailing for three more months, traveling all the way to Liverpool, England. On the way the guns on deck were removed and stored below in crates. Captain Waddell surrendered to British officials aboard the *H.M.S. Donegal* on November 6. The captain, officers, and crew—133 men in all—went ashore on the 10th. All were unconditionally released. The *Shenandoah* thus entered the record books as far and away the last military action of the Civil War. Meanwhile, during its year-long career of prowling the seas the *Shenandoah* had traveled an estimated 58,000 miles. Of the ships encountered, 38 were captured and 34 were destroyed, the latter valued at a total of $1,172,223. Four ships including the *Milo* were bonded and allowed to go to port, mainly for the purpose of delivering captured seamen, as there was not room aboard the *Shenandoah* to accommodate them all. In fact, the total of prisoners amounted to 1,052 or 1,053 seamen. Among the survivors who came to shore on the bonded *Milo* were the four Portuguese seamen would later sign on as crew members of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Wrapping up the situation, on November 6, 1865, another American ship on patrol for the raider, the *U.S.S. Suwanee,* put into San Francisco Bay after an fruitless search in the Pacific for the long since departed *Shenandoah.*

What happened to the *Shenandoah?* She was turned over to the United States consul in England and sold at auction in 1866 or the equivalent of $108,628 to the Sultan of Zanzibar, who changed her name to the *El Majidi* and planned to fit her out in regal style. However, it was decided to make her a cargo ship instead. In 1872 she was wrecked on a coral reef in the Indian Ocean while carrying coal and ivory.

What happened to Waddell? In 1875 he was hired by the Pacific Mail Steamship Co. as captain of the *S.S. San Francisco* on the route between San Francisco and Melbourne. Later he retired and moved to Annapolis, Maryland, where he enjoyed telling midshipmen about his exploits in the Confederate Navy.

The Union Ironclad *Camanche*

In 1862, the second year of the Civil War, the nature of fighting ships changed dramatically. The *U.S.S. Monitor,* a low-profile ironclad ship with a rotating gun turret, was launched at Greenpoint, New York, on January 30. Humorously referred to as a "cheesebox on a raft" by some observers, the vessel was 178 feet long and had a beam of 41½ feet. On her deck was mounted a cylindrical turret of eight-inch armor plate. Measuring nine feet high the rotatable turret had an inside diameter of 20 feet within which two 11-inch guns were mounted. The pilot house protruded four feet above the deck near the front of the ship. The free board was very shallow, with the result that the *Monitor* was very low in the water, and the decks were often awash.

On March 6, 1862, the *Monitor,* under tow, began a trip to Hampton Roads near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Lt. John Lorimer Worden commanded her crew of 58. Meanwhile, the Confederate equivalent, the ironclad *C.S.S. Virginia,* correctly called the *Merrimack* and popularly the *Merrimac,* was launched on March 5. The Confederate ship was much larger, carried a crew of 400 men under Commodore Franklin Buchanan, and was armed with 10 guns. The *Merrimack* had a higher profile than the *Monitor* and was fitted with sloping sides so as to deflect incoming gunshot. She steamed into battle on March 8 and forthwith destroyed two wooden warships of the Union side and forced the frigate *Minnesota* to run aground. On this day the Confederate ironclad single-handedly launched a new era in naval warfare.[1]

On the following morning the *Merrimack* steamed out of port to demolish the stranded *Minnesota* and to prowl the nearby waters to sink any other Union ships that it might encounter. However, the *U.S.S. Monitor* had just arrived, and at 9 a.m. the two ironclads began to shoot at each other. The fusillade was kept up for about two hours, when the *Monitor* ran out of shells and withdrew to a supply ship to replenish its stores. Returning to the engag-

[1] The *Merrimack,* a Union steamer, was at the Norfolk, Virginia Navy Yard when Virginia seceded from the Union on April 17, 1861. It was desired to evacuate the *Merrimack,* but her power plant was not in working order, and she was burned and scuttled to prevent capture. The Confederates raised her hull, repaired the engines and outfitted her with sloping metal sides. The reborn ship was commissioned as the *C.S.S. Virginia* on March 8, 1862, but the *Merrimac* [illegible] she remained to newspaper reporters and other [illegible] who wrote about her, including during her famous encounter with the *Monitor.* The *Merrimack / Virginia* survived the battle only to be burned by the Confederates when Norfolk was evacuated on May 11, 1862. After the Civil War, some tokens or medalets were made from salvaged armor plate of the vessel.

ment, the *Monitor* soon sustained a direct hit on her pilot house. Lt. Worden was injured, and he ordered a retreat. The *Merrimack* remained on the scene awaiting the return of the *Monitor.* After a while it became evident that there would be no further contest, and the *Merrimack* returned to port. The battle had been fought to a draw, or almost, with objective observers (hard to find in wartime) believing the *Merrimack* had gained a slight edge.

The *Monitor* vs. *Merrimack* shoot-out forever changed the style of fighting ships, and one-by-one, the old wood-sided naval vessels were sunk or retired. Also speeding the transition were steam-powered ships with protruding snouts made of wood, covered with iron, called *rams.* These would speed toward an enemy vessel and attempt to pierce its side. The Laird works in England built two rams for a sham owner, revealed to be the Confederacy, but the dreadnoughts were not delivered because of Union protests. Elsewhere, other rams were constructed and took their toll on Union shipping.

With this scenario in place, San Franciscans determined that they should have their own ironclad to protect the harbor. By 1863, turret-style metal-sheathed ships were called *monitors,* after the progenitor.

In the East a monitor was fabricated, then disassembled and put aboard the *Aquila* for shipment to the Pacific. The

During the Civil War the city of San Francisco and nearby bay were vulnerable to Confederate attack which, according to many rumors, could happen at any time. Intended to afford protection again such an eventuality was the city's own ironclad gunboat, the U.S.S. Camanche, modeled after the Union Monitor. Great expectations took a setback, at least temporarily, when the sailing ship Aquila, which had come around Cape Horn at the tip of South America, sank at its dock on November 16, 1863, six days after arriving in San Francisco. On board in disassembled form was a newly-built Camanche. After much effort, the components were recovered by a diving team. In due course the Camanche was put together, and nearly a year later, on November 14, 1864, she was launched. By that time, much of the Confederate threat had ended, although the Shenandoah was rampaging in the Pacific. Surely, if she ventured into San Francisco she could be dispatched by a few shots from the Camanche. However, as events would prove, the two ships never met.

Aquila went around Cape Horn, and on November 10, 1863, came into port and tied up at Hathaway's Wharf. As fate would have it, on the 16th a fierce storm raked San Francisco Bay and did severe damage to many vessels. The *Aquila,* still bearing its precious cargo, went to the bottom at dockside.

Upon examination by divers on November 19th, it was found that her keel and keelsons were fractured. Attempts to salvage her intact were abandoned on December 3. A team of wreck salvagers was sent for, and on January 17, 1864, Capt. Merritt and his crew arrived from New York. They began work on the partially submerged *Aquila* on January 25. Components of the monitor were brought to the surface, and after many delays, on July 12 the contractors, Donahue, Ryan & Secor, trading as the Union Iron Works, began assembling the boat.

Named the *Camanche,* the ironclad was launched on November 14, 1864, to the rousing cheers of thousands of assembled San Franciscans.[1] All went well, except for an unfortunate accident in which "J.P. Buckley, an old and valued citizen, had his ankle caught in a coil of rope during the launch, and so badly crushed as to require amputation."[2]

Fitting-out, completion of details, and adjustments were subsequently made. On January 14, 1865, the boilers were fired up, steam was introduced into the piping system, and it was found that the machinery, rotating turret, and other equipment all functioned properly. Then on January 31, "The monitor *Camanche,* with a number of army and navy officers and invited guests on board, made a successful trial trip to Mare Island."

On March 9, 1865, the *S.S. Golden Age* arrived in San Francisco on one of its trips from Central America. On the passenger list was Commodore McDougal of the U.S. Navy, who had been appointed captain of the *Camanche.* As events proved, the completion of the *Camanche* just about coincided with the completion of the Civil War.[3] The battle of the *Camanche* vs. the *Shenandoah* never took place. The ironclad was eventually decommissioned, and after serving years later as a *coal barge* was scrapped in the 1920s.

The End of the War

On Sunday, April 9, 1865, in the village of Appomattox Court House in Virginia, following a string of Confederate losses, the Civil War came to an end. General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia,

1 Ship name spelled *Comanche* in some accounts.

2 Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1865-6, pp. 22-23, retrospective of recent events. A subsequent account related: "Hon. John P. Buckley died at 8 a.m. [November 17] of the injuries he received at the launch of the *Camanche.* Deceased was one of the pioneer businessmen of San Francisco, having come to this place in 1849. He was foremost in all public enterprises and charities, and his untimely decease was deeply deplored."

3 The *Camanche* was taken to a wharf at Mare Island and remained there until 1899, never having seen combat service.

The *S.S. Golden Age.* This large ship, 285 feet long and of 2,864 tons, was originally built for service over long reaches of open ocean such as from New York to Liverpool or to and from Australia. (*The People's Journal,* November 1853; this image has the common nautical illustration error of the smoke streaming in one direction and the sails billowing in the opposite; a similar gaffe appears on certain United States pattern coins made in the 1870s.)

requested an interview with his opponent, General Ulysses S. Grant. The latter had been given the authority to arrange terms of surrender, but not to negotiate a peace settlement. The two met, and Grant allowed Lee's men to keep their sidearms, baggage, and horses if they had them, and return home. The Confederates laid their battle flags down, but Gen. Lee was not asked to surrender his sword. During the next week there were some scattered skirmishes and actions in areas in which the news had not traveled, and in Mobile Bay the *U.S.S. Ida* was sunk by a torpedo. But, indeed, the war was over for nearly everyone, the crew of the *Shenandoah* excepted. For days after the surrender, fireworks were exploded, parades were conducted, and cannons were fired in celebration.

However, the end of the war brought mixed emotions to the fore in San Francisco.[1] While there was a general relief that hostilities had ended, there was not unanimous enthusiasm. A minority of citizens regretted the outcome. By that time well over 16,000 California men had enlisted in the service of the Union.[2]

The assassination of President Lincoln on April 14, 1865, resulted in his elevation in the minds of even many who had not been his supporters during the war. News of his death reached San Francisco by telegraph. Seeking an outlet for four years of pent-up emotions, angry mobs ranged through the streets on the 15th and destroyed several newspapers which had published articles criticizing or defaming Lincoln during the war, or which had espoused the Confederate cause, or had encouraged dissension. The presses, type cases, and other equipment in the offices of the *Democratic Press, News Letter, Occidental, Monitor,* and *Franco-Americaine* were laid to waste. The same would have happened to the *Echo du Pacifique,* except that its facilities were in the same building as the highly admired *Alta California.* Troops were called in to quell the disorder, and stand guard at the ravished offices, but few arrests were made.[3]

Within the same day, just about every public house and place of business was draped with black cloth and other symbols of mourning. On the 16th all of the local churches held memorial services for the martyred president. At Platt's Hall, where in 1860 well-known preacher Thomas Starr King had given a ringing oration about the preservation of the Union, citizens crowded in to hear tributes and eulogies to Lincoln.

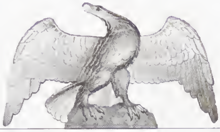
Locally as well as nationwide, there was much fear of the future and a lack of confidence in the financial markets as well as the government. Even though the war was over, the value of greenbacks plummeted to as low as 35¢ on the dollar. Once again, Californians were thankful that they did not hold such paper notes. Confederate currency became absolutely worthless. In the East the monetary situation remained in chaos. However, in California, Oregon, and Washington there was no problem. Gold coins were supreme, including gleaming 1865-dated double eagles freshly made at the San Francisco Mint.

[1] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California,* Vol. VII 1860-1890, pp 312 ff.

[2] Leo P. Kibby, "California Soldiers in the Civil War," *California Historical Society Quarterly,* December 1961, p. 343. California was credited with 15,725 volunteers plus 500 men credited to the state of Massachusetts and another 500 credited to the Territory of Washington.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1865-6, pp. 20-21, retrospective of recent events, among other sources.

Chapter Ten



Oregon and the Brother Jonathan

Oregon and the Brother Jonathan

Oregon played a vital role in the life story of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* and on her last voyage in 1865 she was headed there. The success of the state was also the success of the *Brother Jonathan.*

As if this were not enough to enshrine the ship in the annals of the state, on February 14, 1859, the state of Oregon was admitted to the Union. News was telegraphed from Washington to St. Louis, then carried to San Francisco by the Butterfield Overland Stage. From that point, the dispatch was in the hands of the captain of the *Brother Jonathan,* which arrived in Portland at 4:00 a.m. on March 5, 1859.[1] Apparently, the news was received without celebration, and in due course the information was dispatched by horseback rider to the capital at Salem. By contrast, when California had become a state in 1850, there were celebrations throughout San Francisco, an observance which has been memorialized annually ever since.[2] Regardless, the *Brother Jonathan* earned a secure niche in the history of the new state.

The Sailing Ships *Columbia* and *Washington*

Somewhat similar to the conditions in California, but with different sets of circumstances, banking developed cautiously to the north. Trading was often in commodities such as beaver pelts. Coins were not often seen, and when they were they were apt to be Spanish-American silver reales and their multiples and fractions.

Later generations of numismatists would recognize several early issues relating to Oregon and nearby Washington Territory. All of these are highly prized today.

The earliest numismatic item with a direct connection is the famous 1787 Columbia and Washington medal, depicting two ships, from dies made in Boston, possibly by Paul Revere.[3] The *Columbia,* of 220 tons displacement, was directed by Captain John Kendrick and was accompanied by the 80-ton *Washington* under his second in command, Captain Robert Gray. During this trip the adventurers took a supply of the aforementioned medals. Gray and Kendrick exchanged ships in the Pacific, and Kendrick departed for China. The *Washington* never returned to America.

In 1790 Gray commanded the *Columbia* and made a second voyage to the Pacific Northwest, discovering the Columbia River in 1791. For distribution and trading to natives on this trip the ship carried Massachusetts copper coins dated 1787 and 1788, the 1787 Columbia and Washington medals being redundant as Kendrick's name was prominently featured on the obverse.

An interesting early account of these medals is translated from a text written by a Dominican and published in Valencia in 1794, *Noticias de la Provincia de California:*

[1] Miles F. Potter, *Oregon's Golden Years,* 1995, p. 37; other sources.

[2] California was admitted to the Union on September 7, 1850, and the California delegation in Washington presented itself on the 9th, the latter being the *official* day of admission. News reached San Francisco on the morning of October 18th via the *S.S. Oregon,* which steamed into the harbor flying bunting and special flags. Business was suspended, the courts were dismissed, a huge parade was held, and the city went wild (cf. Bancroft, *History of California,* Vol. VI, 1848-1859, pp. 348-349).

[3] Sources include: Frederic W. Howay (editor), *The Voyage of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast 1787-1790 and 1790-1793,* 1941; Farran Zerbe, "Medal to Captain Robert Gray," *The Numismatist,* June 1906; *Historical Magazine,* September 1870; *American Journal of Numismatics,* October 1870 (biographical notes on Kendrick, Gray, and others); *American Journal of Numismatics,* January 1872 (biographical notes on John M. Pintard); Edgar H. Adams, "The Columbia Medal," *The Numismatist,* September 1913. 1997. In *Standard Catalog of U.S. Tokens 1700-1900,* Russell Rulau, p. 47, quotes information that 300 pieces are believed to have been struck in pewter, 12 in silver, and at least 30 in copper. Two die varieties are described.

"Columbia and Washington" medal dated 1787, possibly from dies cut by Paul Revere. Depicted are the sailing ships of the same names which explored the Pacific Ocean off the coast of what later became known as Washington and Oregon. The *Columbia* was commanded by J. Kendrick, whose name appears at the lower border of the obverse of the medal. These pieces, struck in copper (mostly) and silver, were distributed to Native Americans along the shore. During the voyage, Kendrick swapped vessels with Captain Robert Gray of the *Washington*, and departed with the *Washington* to China. In 1790, Gray took the *Columbia* on a second voyage to the Pacific Northwest, this time carrying a supply of copper cents and half cents minted in Massachusetts and dated 1787 and 1788, the earlier medals being inappropriate as Kendrick was no longer involved. (1787 medal in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society)

> We do not know what crime he committed. But this is certain: That the said English American, named John Kendrig [or Kendrick], had coined money in his name, and I have four of the pieces. On one side was a sea with two vessels with the name of Washington, and on the other some letters that expressed the expedition he was going on to our coasts.[1]

Lewis and Clark Distribute Medals

The Lewis and Clark expedition, headed by Captain Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, set forth from St. Louis, Missouri, on May 14, 1804, to explore the American Northwest. The adventurers would remain on the trail until returning to its point of origin on September 23, 1806. Their mission was to explore the upper reaches of the land acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase—the continuing course of empire to the westward.

Among the gifts taken for presentation to Indians were silver and copper peace medals, today known as "Seasons Medals," featuring designs by American artist John Trumbull. These were struck in England from beautifully detailed dies engraved by Conrad Heinrich Küchler, one of the most talented diecutters on the staff of the Soho Mint.

The three different medals in the suite were intended to acquaint Indians with the advantages of a domesticated life. "The Farmer" medal showed a agriculturist (somewhat resembling George Washington) standing in his field, "The Home" showed the interior of a residence complete with a loom and fireplace, and "The Shepherd" showed a man and his cattle.[2] In addition, peace medals bearing the portrait of President Thomas Jefferson were distributed.

Proud of the gifts bestowed by the Lewis and Clark entourage, Native Americans typically wore them on cords around their necks. By 1865, when New York journalist Albert Deane Richardson traveled through Oregon, occasional specimens were still encountered in the hands of descendants of those who had received them.[3]

The Oregon "Beaver" Token

Another classic among early numismatic issues relating to the Oregon Territory is the brass token dated 1820 issued by the North West Company (also spelled Northwest Company). Such tokens were intended for use in the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest, especially the present-day states of Oregon and Washington and, to the north, British Columbia. The obverse bears the image of King George IV of England, and the reverse depicts a beaver. Nearly all tokens were holed to facilitate their being stored on strings. These pieces may have been made by John Walker & Company, or by Cotterhill, Hill & Company, both of which firms were located in England.

Tokens were given to Native Americans in exchange for beaver pelts. At any time they could be redeemed for merchandise at company trading posts. Although the North West Company was merged into the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, it is probable that the tokens were used for a number of years thereafter. Most extant specimens show

[1] *American Journal of Numismatics*, July 1872, quoting *Historical Magazine*, April 1863, p. 130. Spanish text published in Valencia in 1794, Letter ii, p. 56. The "crime" may refer to allegations that when Kendrick went to China, he converted assets to his personal use.

[2] A detailed description of these medals can be found, among other places, in the Bowers and Merena sale of the Virgil Brand Estate Collection, June 1984, under Lot 962, which offered a cased set of the three designs.

[3] Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, p. 408: "At the mouth of the Columbia, Indians still exhibit medals left by Lewis and Clark on their 1804-1806 exploring tour." • Born in Franklin, MA, October 6, 1833, Richardson became a newspaper writer as early as age 18. During the Civil War he went behind Confederate lines as a reporter in disguise for the *New York Tribune*, was captured, later escaped, and later wrote a highly popular book, published in 1865, *The Field, the Dungeon, and the Escape*. While in prison, his wife died. Later, he became enamored of the wife of Daniel McFarland, who divorced her husband and became engaged to marry Richardson. On November 26, 1869, the angered McFarland came to Richardson's office at the *Tribune* and shot him with a pistol. Mortally wounded, Richardson lived only until December 2nd. Meanwhile, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher (who was to participate in one of the most sensational scandals of the late nineteenth century) married the couple.

signs of extensive wear. The Hudson's Bay Company remained prominent in the district for many years thereafter and had a near monopoly for supplies and provisions. Thus, in the late 1840s the Hudson's Bay Company allowed only $10 per ounce for gold dust in trade, while other merchants might allow up to $12, this against a price in San Francisco of about $16.

Advice to Emigrants

In 1833 and 1834, Philip L. Edwards, a Missouri schoolteacher, taught students in Champoeg, Oregon. In 1838 he went back to the East in order to encourage emigration to Oregon, which at the time was jointly controlled by the United States and Great Britain. Interested in the development of the area, Edwards furnished a report to the federal government as to conditions there. In 1842 his *Sketch of the Oregon Territory or, Emigrants' Guide* was printed at the office of the *Herald* newspaper in Liberty, Missouri.[1]

Edwards advised readers that the preferred way for people to travel to Oregon overland from the East was by horseback or on mules. Concerning wagons, he felt that they might be an aid for women and children, but after about the first two-thirds of the trip they must of necessity be abandoned, as the terrain was so rough that "in many places it would be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to get them along *empty*."[2]

Arrangements should be made long in advance for goods and equipment to be shipped by sailing vessel from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) to the mouth of the Columbia River, one-way voyage of about two weeks, and for other freight to be shipped by water from Missouri....[3]

Further:

> There was, when I left, no gold or silver in the Territory. Peltries constituted the circulating medium, an otter skin passing at 10 and a beaver skin at 11 shillings, Halifax; and for small change, beads answered a very happy purpose. Fur skins, at these rates, commanded goods at 50% advance on the London invoice prices. Here there are no inflations and contractions in monetary affairs.[4]

Gen. Wright and Fort Vancouver

Edwards estimated that a properly prepared expedition, if traveling quickly and efficiently, would take about five months to reach Fort Vancouver north of the Columbia River in present-day Washington.[5] This outpost was founded in 1825 by Dr. John McLoughlin for the Hudson's Bay Company. McLoughlin, a physician by training, became associated with the North West Company and in 1821 participated in the aforementioned merger.

The fortified outpost served effectively as the center of trading and protection for about 1,000 white settlers who transacted with thousands of Indians in the territory. McLoughlin set all of the rules for the fort and governed it with an iron hand. In 1842, McLoughlin founded Oregon City in the same district.

In July 1865, General George Wright, California's Civil War protector and hero who was now a passenger aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* was headed for Fort Vancouver to take charge of what had become a town that spread far beyond the original outpost. The territory was quite familiar to him, as he had served there in the preceding decade. While Wright's activities in California have been mentioned, a notice of his Oregon and Washington years may be of interest:

Wright was in command of the northern district of California from September 17, 1852, to May 19, 1855, with headquarters at Fort Reading. On March 3, 1855, he was made colonel of the 9th Infantry, having served in California and in the regions to the north. He commanded the Northern District of the Department of the Pacific until 1857, and during that time conducted actions against Indians at and near the Columbia River, especially at the Cascades in 1856.

The vast lands that were formerly the domain of Native Americans were being increasingly encroached upon by white settlers who had little or no regard for the indigenous people. In 1858 Wright proceeded against the Spokane Indians and engaged in several actions. One historian reported that Wright and his "complete little army," going out from their base in Fort Walla Walla, killed or wounded about 100 Indians, captured and hanged 12 others, and killed nearly 1,000 of their horses, while his casualties amounted to just *one* wounded soldier.[6] Wright detested Indians, and as has been related, he sought to quarantine many California natives on

[1] Circulation must have been limited, for but one original copy can be accounted for today. The unique example is in the W.R. Coe Collection in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

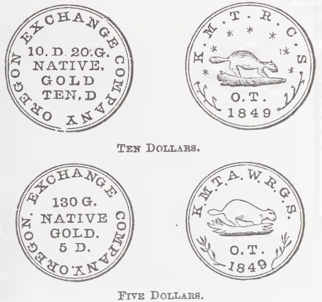
[2] Edwards, p. 4.

[3] Although Edwards did not discuss the route, this would have been down the Mississippi to New Orleans, then by a sailing vessel around Cape Horn at the lower reaches of South America, continuing up the Pacific Coast.

[4] British shillings (minted in London) circulating in the Oregon Territory were reckoned as to their value in distant Halifax, Nova Scotia, which was under British rule. Years later in 1858, when the first decimal coins were issued by the Province of Canada, the silver twenty cent piece was made at par with the Halifax shilling, although there was some objection to this as many thought the Halifax shilling was worth closer to [illegible]. From this and the Edwards narrative it can be assumed that the value of an 1820 North West Co. beaver token, worth one beaver skin, would have been worth about $2.50 at the time, or about equivalent to an American gold quarter eagle.

[5] Fort Vancouver in Washington, as well as Vancouver Island and Vancouver, the capital of British Columbia, took their names from Captain George Vancouver (1758-1798), who sailed with Captain James Cook on his [illegible] and second voyages of exploration. After Cook's death the British Admiralty gave him command of the *Discovery*, aboard which ship he explored the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America, first arriving there on April [illegible], 1792. His travels were chronicled in a book published in [illegible], *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World* [illegible].

[6] Thomas W. Prosch, "Indian War in Washington," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, 1915.



The $10 and $5 gold "beaver" coins struck by the Oregon Exchange Co., Oregon City, 1849, from gold brought back from California. Such pieces were made of native metal without added alloy, and thus they abraded quickly. (Bancroft, *History of Oregon*)

Catalina Island during the Civil War. Years later, some laudatory newspaper accounts gave as one of his career highlights his killing of Indians in the Northwest. By Wright's reckoning, the Indians were "wrong" on all counts—they should not have resented the takeover of their land, or the cruel treatment by the whites, or a succession of broken treaties and promises.

Oregon Exchange Co. Gold Coins

In 1848 word of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on the American River in California spread north to the Oregon settlements. This was months before the news was widely circulated in the East. Seeking quick and easy fortunes, many Oregonians traveled southward and were among the first outsiders to arrive at the bonanza sites. Some met with a degree of success and came back home with unrefined dust and nuggets. Realizing that gold in native form was of uncertain value and could not be easily used in commerce, and that the Hudson's Bay Company was only allowing $16 per ounce for it in trade, the Oregon Legislature on February 15, 1849, passed an act which provided for the establishment of a territorial mint. Had this come to pass, this would have antedated any coinage facility in California. However, the governor declared this act to be in contravention to the laws of the United States, and plans were terminated.

To remedy the situation a group of eight merchants and citizens banded together in Oregon City, at the terminus of the Oregon Trail, to establish a private mint. The principals were W.K. Kilbourne, Theophilus Magruder, James Taylor, George Abernethy, W H. Willson, William H. Rector, J. G. Campbell, and Noyes Smith. The firm was designated as the Oregon Exchange Co.

Hamilton Cambell, a Methodist missionary, was employed to cut dies for a $5 gold coin. William H. Rector may have engraved the dies for a coin of the $10 denomination.[1] The coins produced were to be virgin gold without added alloy, although certain elements including silver were natural alloys of California metal.

In due course, specimens reached the East Coast. Messrs. Eckfeldt and Dubois, keepers of the Mint Cabinet in Philadelphia, noted:[2]

> The coin is not well struck, but is pleasantly distinguished by the picture of a beaver, a good emblem of mining industry and of western life.

A nearly contemporary account of the coinage appeared in the *Oregon Statesman*, September 18, 1865, and may be the most factual known:[3]

> OREGON CITY, Aug. 4, 1865.
>
> *Hon. Samuel E. May, Secretary of State of Oregon*
>
> Sir: In reply to yours of 17th ultime, requesting a history of the mint established in 1849, I give you a brief account. Upon the discovery of the gold mines and the consequent rush of miners, for nearly every man that went to California at that time became a miner, and the great demand for supplies to clothe and feed them, Oregon very naturally sent a great number of her population together with all the supplies that she could spare from her immediate wants, receiving in return a large amount of gold dust of the most superior quality, taken from the Feather and Yuba rivers principally.
>
> Nearly every man brought gold dust with him on his return to Oregon, and, finding that a great annoyance and waste accompanied the payments of small sums in dust, was naturally anxious to dispose of sufficiency of dust for coin to meet his immediate demands. There being but little coin in the country at that time, caused an influx from the nearest points where it could be obtained, viz: South America—and as the debasement of the currency of nearly all the South American states was great and notorious, so much so, in fact, that upon my return from the Atlantic side in the latter part of 1847, before the gold mines were discovered, they did not hesitate to give me, during my stay in Panama, 25 of their nominal quarters of a dollar in exchange for a United States half eagle coin; and when you take into consideration that a very large amount of gold dust, the intrinsic value of which was between $18 and $19 per ounce, was being daily exchanged at the rate of $11 per ounce, payable in the debased South American coin at a rate of four of these nominal quarters of a dollar to the dollar, you will see at once the enormous loss Oregon was suffering—the double discount on the gold and coin.
>
> A small party of gentlemen met at the counting room of Campbell & Smith to take the foregoing matter into consider-

[1] Victor Wallace, machinist, has also been suggested as a candidate (in twentieth-century numismatic accounts from the Lockley account reprinted below; however, it seems that the Campbell account should take precedence).

[2] Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois, *New Varieties of Gold and Silver Coins, Counterfeit Coins and Bullion. With Mint Values.* 1851, p. 7.

[3] Citation furnished by Dan Owens.

ation, and concluded for the general benefit of the country to form a company for the purpose of coining the dust into a shape that would be of par value at any place where gold coin was used. The names of the parties that paid for the machinery, dies, &c., and that incurred and lost the whole expenses of the transaction were Kilborne, Magruder, Taylor, Rector, Campbell & Smith.

The design of the dies was drawn by myself at the first meeting of the company, and immediately adopted as being appropriate. The tariff on goods exchanged by the Hudson Bay Company for furs (of which beaver money was the main item in Oregon), being much less than for coin, beaver orders on the Hudson Bay Co. were considered the best money in the country.

As soon as we commenced making the coin, gold dust rose to $16 per ounce, at which rate we exchanged our coin for dust, when so requested.

After having issued some $10,000, and broken both of our crucibles (we had with much trouble only been able to procure two), and having effected our object, viz:– Raised the price of gold dust and stopped the influx of South American currency, and every piece that we coined being at the expense of the company, we concluded to cease operations and did so.

I send you an assay made for us at the U.S. Mint at Philadelphia in 1850; the first mentioned on the memorandum was the clippings of the last coining, and the contents of our last crucible, when it broke, together with some very fine Yuba dust; the second is our Oregon beaver coin, and I assure you that every coin in this assay was so abraded, that the design was almost indistinguishable, from the wear by contact with alloyed and, of course, harder coin.

I also send you the dies, which, if you see proper, I would like to have deposited with the $10 piece you allude to. They were made by W.H. Rector and Hamilton Cambell in Oregon.

If you do not see proper to so dispose of the dies, please returns them to me by a safe hand.[1]

I have the honor to be,
Yours, respectfully,
J.G. CAMPBELL

The designs on the coins, eagles and half eagles were as follows:

On the eagles, "Oregon Exchange Company," on the margin, and "10 D 20 G Native Gold Ten D," across the face, and on the reverse side, the letters "K.M.T.R.C.S. (initial letters of the bankers) and O.T. (for the Territory) 1849" on the margin, and the figure of a beaver in the centre. On the half eagle, the same as on the first side of the eagle, with the exception of 5 D instead of 10 D, and also 130G instead of 20G; and on the reverse side, the same as the reverse side of the eagle, except that the letter "A" appears among the initial letters on the margin, which is supposed to represent Gov. Abernethy.

– Editor, *Statesman*.

An account written in 1928 by Fred Lockley told of a second-hand account furnished by a descendant of Victor Monroe Wallace, giving somewhat different information:

James Taylor of Clatsop Plains was appointed director of the mint, Truman P. Powers, treasurer, W.H. Willson, melter and coiner, and George L. Curry, assayer.... A company called The Oregon Exchange Company was formed to operate the mint. The members of this company were W.K. Kilbourne, Theophilus Magruder, James Taylor, George Abernethy, W.H. Willson, W.H. Rector, J.G. Campbell and Noyes Smith. Mr. Rector was employed as coiner. Various historians have stated that J.G. Campbell made the stamps and dies. This is not correct, for Mr. Campbell did not understand the use of tools and could not have made them. He was authorized, however, to have the stamps and dies made. He employed a jeweler at Salem to make the dies for the $5 gold piece and he hired my father to make the dies for the $10 gold piece. Father was employed in the mint....

The $5 gold dies bore on the obverse the initials K.M.T.A.W.R.G.S., representing the names of the company members. The G was an error and should have been C for Campbell. The obverse of the $5 piece pictured a beaver on a log, facing to the right, the same animal which, being a trademark of the Territory, was earlier used on the Northwest Co. tokens dated 1820. Below was the designation T. O. for Territory of Oregon, and below that, the year 1849, with branches to the sides. On the reverse appeared the notation OREGON EXCHANGE COMPANY, 130 G. NATIVE GOLD 5 D. The pieces contained 130 grains of gold, or nearly 5½ pennyweight.

The $10 coins were a variation of the same general motif and seem to be of the same general workmanship, but may have been cut by a different person as related above. If so, the same tools were probably used.

Coinage amounted to approximately 6,000 of the $5 pieces and 2,850 $10 coins. These were accepted at face value in trade throughout the Oregon Territory, which at that time included the present states of Oregon and Washington and all land toward the east reaching to the Rocky Mountains. At the time Oregon City had approximately 1,000 white citizens, while the entire Territory comprised about 9,000 immigrant inhabitants. Many of the Oregon gold coins were sent to California in payment for merchandise, San

[1] Richard Doty, *America's Money, America's Story*, 1998, pp. 120-121: "The dies for this coinage still exist, housed at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland.... [I had an opportunity to examine them.] When I did so, one thing became apparent: the Oregon pioneers were striking their eagles and half eagles by hand, without the intervention of an ordinary coining press. The obverse and reverse dies fit together in a kind of socket, whereby one die was actually sunk into a depression, articulated with the other. A planchet could be dropped into the hole and positioned atop the lower die. Then the 'press' was closed, and the top die was struck with a sledge hammer. When the apparatus was opened, the finished coin could be popped out with a wooden mallet." • Donald H. Kagin, *Private Gold Coins and Patterns of the United States*, 1981, p. 370, lists impressions in copper ($5) and white metal ($5 and $10), and further notes: "Two [illegible] in aluminum are known to have been made when the original Beaver coinage dies were stolen in 1859." [How the "stolen in 1859" comment reconciles with original partner Campbell having them in 1863 is not known to the present writer. The use of aluminum in 1859 would have been highly unusual, for it was virtually a precious metal at the time, although a process developed in 1857 reduced the price to about $2 per ounce.] • W. Elliot Woodward is said to have seen or handled a white metal impression of the $10 in 1874. • The December 2, 1996, issue of *Coin World* included an article by Dr. George J. Fuld, punningly titled "A Gnawing Mystery," which stated that the original dies of this issue are preserved by the Oregon Historical Society, and that some restrikes were made 1961 of the $10 piece, but not in gold as permission could not be secured from the government. However, at least one gold restrike was made at some date, as one turned up in 1988.

Francisco having established itself by 1849 as the leading commercial center of the West Coast.

In Portland, the first bank of importance seems to have been set up in rooms over the grocery store of Ladd & Tilton in 1859 and given the impressive title of Bank of Oregon. At the time, individuals and partnerships could engage in banking, but no charter or sanction was given by the state government. Certain of the $5 and $10 gold "beaver" coins were still in circulation, and Ladd & Tilton counterstamped some of them with its advertisement. The firm remained prominent for the ensuing decade and was often mentioned in accounts of gold and silver bullion, especially metal brought from the eastern reaches of the state and from Idaho. Eventually nearly all of the Oregon Exchange Co. coins were melted. However, when Albert D. Richardson traveled through the state in 1865, he noted in his journal that an occasional piece could still be found.[1]

Lack of Paper Money

In the early 1860s paper money did not circulate in Oregon, having been made illegal in 1857[2] The Constitution of the state included this restrictive clause:

> Article XI. Section 1. The legislative assembly shall not have the power to establish or incorporate any bank, or banking company, or moneyed institution whatever; nor shall any bank, company, or institution exist in the state with the privilege of making, issuing, or putting in circulation any bill, check, certificate, promissory note, or other paper, or the paper of any bank, company, or person, to circulate as money.

The advent of federal Legal Tender notes in the early 1860s and how to treat them became the subject of intense interest and debate in Oregon. Historian Bancroft wrote:[4]

> The first impulse of a loyal man was to declare his willingness to take the notes of the government at par, and in Oregon many so declared themselves. The citizens of The Dalles held a meeting and pledged themselves to trade only with persons 'patriotic enough to take the notes of the government at par.'
>
> The treasurer of Marion County refused to receive Legal Tenders at all [illegible] while [illegible] received them for county [illegible] Clackamas received them for [illegible] and county taxes, and Columbia at first received and then refused them. The state treasurer refused to receipt for Legal Tenders, which subjected the counties to a forfeiture of 25% if the coin was not paid within a certain time. In 1863, when greenbacks [Legal Tender notes] were worth 40 cents on the dollar, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Benton, and Clatsop counties tendered their state tax in this currency, which the state treasurer refused to accept. [Thus] these counties did not pay their taxes.
>
> It was contended by some that the constitution of Oregon prohibited the circulation of paper money. It did, in fact, declare that the legislative assembly should not have power to establish or incorporate any bank and forbade any bank or company to exist in the state with the privilege of making, issuing or putting into circulation any notes or paper to circulate as money.
>
> In California and Oregon no public banks had ever existed, all being owned by private individuals, being simply banks of deposit, where the proprietors loaned their own capital, and, to a certain extent, that of their depositors. They issued no bills, and banked alone upon gold or its equivalent. They therefore refused to receive greenbacks on general deposit; and these notes were thrown upon the market to be bought and sold at their value estimated in gold, exactly reversing the money operations of the East. In New York gold was purchased at a premium with greenbacks; in California and Oregon greenbacks were purchased at a discount with gold. In New York paper money was bankable, and gold was not offered, being withdrawn from circulation. In San Francisco and Portland gold only was bankable, and paper money was offered in trade at current rates, and not desired except by those who had bills to pay in New York.
>
> In January 1863 the bankers and businessmen of Portland met and agreed to receive Legal Tenders at the [discounted] rates current in San Francisco, as published from time to time in the daily papers of Portland by Ladd & Tilton, bankers. The merchants of Salem [Oregon] soon followed, then those of The Dalles. Finally the merchants published a black-list containing the names of those who paid debts in Legal Tenders, to be circulated among businessmen for their information. Bills of goods were subsequently headed "Payable in U.S. Gold Coin." These methods protected merchants in general, but did not keep the subject out of court....
>
> In an action [in the Oregon courts] between private parties, the question being on the power of Congress to make paper money a legal tender, the court ruled in favor of Congress. On the other hand, it was decided by Judge Stratton that the law of Congress of February 25, 1862, was unconstitutional. This law made Treasury Notes a legal tender for all debts, dues, and demands, which included the salaries of judges, which were paid from the State Treasury. Hence came the decision of a supreme judge of Oregon against the power of Congress.
>
> Turn and twist the subject as they would, the currency question never could be made to adjust itself to the convenience and profit of all, because it was a war measure, and to many meant present self-sacrifice and loss. For instances, when greenbacks were worth no more than 30 or 40 cents on the dollar in the dark days of the spring of 1863, federal officers in California and Oregon were compelled to accept them at par from the government, and to pay for everything bought on the Pacific Coast at gold prices, greatly advanced by eastern inflation. The merchants, however, profited largely by the exchange and the advanced prices; selling for gold and buying with greenbacks, having to some extent and for a time the benefit of the difference between gold and Legal Tenders....[7]

[1] *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, p. 408.

[2] Sources include Bray Hammond, *Banking and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, pp. 606 (legislation and legal citation); 617 (restriction in force since 1857).

Much of this clause became irrelevant following an 1880 case in law (cf. Thorpe, v. 3013, *Oregon vs. Hibernian Savings and Loan Association*, 8 Bellinger 399-402). By that time, federal law had already prohibited the issuance of private notes by banks, and thus the finding was moot.

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, Vol. II. 1848-1888, pp. 640-643.

Cf. *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1862; *Alta California*, November 18, 1862; *Oregon Argus*, December 6, 1862; *Oregon Statesman*, December 22, 1862; *Oregon General Laws*, 92.

Oregon Statesman, January 5, 1863; *Portland Oregonian*, August 30, 1864.

[7] Bancroft seems to have erred on this point, in Oregon and in California, federal employees as well as merchants were aware of the great differential between the value of gold coins and greenbacks.

> The Oregon Legislature of 1864 followed the example of California and passed a specific contract law. No money should be received in satisfaction of a judgment other than the kind specified in such judgment; and gold and silver coins of the United States...should be received at their nominal values.

Later, paper money was circulated in Oregon, as it was also in California (beginning in the latter state in 1870). The First National Bank of Portland received federal Charter No. 1553 on September 8, 1865, and subsequently issued First Charter series $5, $10, and $20 notes.[1]

Captain Staples of the *Brother Jonathan*

The loyalty of Oregonians was divided during the Civil War. In 1861, Governor Whiteaker refused to answer President Abraham Lincoln's call for troops. Whiteaker was succeeded in office the next year by A.C. Gibbs, who raised two regiments. However, the earlier reluctance by the former governor was not forgotten. Later, the state paid for troops to guard the settlements along the Oregon Trail, which officials thought was the federal government's responsibility.

The captain of *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was involved in one of the more unfortunate Civil War incidents in the state:[2]

> Regarding Captain [George W.] Staples of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*.... Captain Dodge, a gambler named Ferd. Patterson, and a familiar character known as "One-armed Brown" were drinking in the old Pioneer Hotel on Front and Washington streets....
>
> Capt. Staples lifted his glass and said: "Here's to the Union."
>
> "To hell with the Union," answered Patterson.
>
> Immediately the other men took after Patterson, who ran out of the hotel into the street. The fire bells were rung...summoning nearly everybody who lived in Portland. A great crowd collected around the Pioneer Hotel and threatened to kill Patterson. Brown got a rope, the lamp post was handy, and Patterson was all that was needed. He had taken refuge on the steps of the hotel, and as Brown approached he cried out, "I will kill the first man to come up the stairs."
>
> "Give me the rope," shouted Capt. Staples, "and I'll bring him down by the neck."
>
> Staples took the rope and started upstairs. As he approached Patterson the latter fired a shot in the air. Not being daunted, Staples kept on. The next time Patterson shot to kill, and Capt. Staples fell with a mortal wound in the stomach. Patterson fled and took refuge in an outhouse, and surrendered to Lewis M. Starr...who was a deputy sheriff. As he was leading Patterson to jail, hundreds of people crowded around and threatened mob violence. Sheriff [Addison M.] Starr appeared on the scene about this time, and drawing his pistol, threatened to kill the first man to touch Patterson. This prevented trouble.
>
> The next day Patterson was released on $10,000 bond, furnished by ex-U.S. Senator Ben Stark, T.J. Holmes, and A. [or H.] Arrigoni.[3] The jury before which he was tried acquitted him.[4] Patterson was afterward shot dead in a barber's chair in Walla Walla, by a man named Donahue, who was a special policeman in Portland when Capt. Staples was killed.

Silver and Gold Strikes in Oregon 1861-1865

In Oregon in the 1860s, gold fever was in the air. Early in the decade important strikes were made in eastern Oregon and in Idaho, creating yet another Gold Rush on the heels of the great California migration and its smaller relative, the exploration of the gold fields on the Fraser River in British Columbia.

In Portland there was a scene familiar to anyone who had been in California in 1848: carpenters laid down their tools, fishermen hung up their nets, farmers left their fields and cattle untended, and there was a rush to the new land of riches. In the upper reaches of the Columbia River these were boom times. Towns sprung up as if by magic, and consumer goods such as tools and food readily sold at multiples of what they were worth on the coast. An estimated $3,000,000 in gold was brought by miners to Portland in 1861, and this was just the beginning.[5]

The *Annual Report of the Director of the Mint*, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1863 contained a section titled "New Mining Regions":

> Idaho at this time especially claims our attention. It is emphatically the land of promise and of gold. This region was set off as a separate territory at the last session of Congress.... The localities where workings have commenced are numerous, but many of them have not been reported or described. They must be various and widely separated, judging from the characteristic varieties in the quality of their production. Among the deposits [of gold] we have had grades of fineness from 795 to 949 thousandths; the latter in considerable quantity from Salmon River, a tributary to the Columbia. The quality of the gold produced from the mines of Idaho is equal to that in the older gold regions of our country, and the quantity appears to be inexhaustible.
>
> Not less promising are the mines opening in Oregon and Washington Territory. The workings are numerous and constantly increasing in number. The characteristic energy of our people will, no doubt, soon develop the mineral wealth of these far distant [from Philadelphia where the Mint director's office was located] regions, and thus invite and stimulate immigration to our North Pacific territories. In Oregon the fineness of the gold seems to be tolerably regular and steady, and nearly equal to the average of California. In the gold from the Washington Territory the variation is great, ranging from 650 to 938 thousandths.

[1] 1,500 four-subject sheets of $5s were issued, totaling 6,000 notes, and 6,100 sheets containing $10-$10-$10-$20 denominations for a total of 18,300 $10s and 6,100 $20s.

[2] Retrospective account years later in the *Oregonian*, May 1, 1890, as part of a tribute to Addison M. Starr, longtime Portland resident who had recently passed away, reprinted in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, vol. 80, 1979, pp. 141-142. Also there was a mention of this incident in the *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 4, 1863.

[3] Later in the present text Arrigoni will be mentioned in connection with a sad visit he made to Crescent City, CA, in August 1865. A. or H.J. Arrigoni was a relative of Mr. S.N. Arrigoni, proprietor of Portland's [illegible] hotel.

[4] *The Oregon Reporter*, August 6, 1865, under "[illegible]" From our Traveling Correspondent, included a further story about Patterson, and how he had murdered Sheriff Pinkham of Boise, Idaho, following an argument in which Pinkham stated that Jefferson Davis, former president of the Confederacy, would be hung for treason. Patterson was described as a ne'er-do-well, while Pinkham had been a professional gambler prior to becoming sheriff [illegible] before the incident. This issue also contained news about the *Brother Jonathan*.

[5] *Oregonian*, January 18, 1862.

The *S.S. Sierra Nevada* earlier in her career, in the Pacific Ocean off the Golden Gate, the entrance to San Francisco Bay. Similar to the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, she had three masts and one smokestack. (*Harper's Weekly*, June 6, 1857)

> The returns from Oregon, Idaho, and Washington Territories are as yet imperfect, but enough is known to warrant the statement that in quantity and quality the gold of those regions will rival, if not surpass, the productions of the California mines.[1]

Just as San Francisco had been the commercial center of the California Gold Rush, Portland was the center of the Oregon and Idaho Gold Rush. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was to play yet another role in the transportation of golden treasure and the in-migration of gold seekers to the latest El Dorado. On a single trip from San Francisco to Portland, April 1862, she reportedly carried an astounding 1,000 passengers![2] Obviously, once again the sidewheel steamer was in the right place at the right time!

Treasure Aboard the *Brother Jonathan*

Gold and silver in various forms were shipped overland, then down the Columbia River to The Dalles, then to Portland for shipment by sea to San Francisco, the center of commerce on the West Coast and the site of the only federal mint within 2,500 miles.

On August 18, 1863, the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* arrived in San Francisco from the north "with a crowd of passengers and treasure amounting to near $300,000."[3] On August 28, the competing S.S. *Sierra Nevada* arrived with $440,[illegible] in treasure from the gold fields in that district.[4] On September 23 the *Brother Jonathan* carried $315,000 in gold to San Francisco, and a further $203,835 on October 12.[5] This was an astounding reversal of the earlier days in which gold had been shipped *from* San Francisco, not *to* it!

At the time the *S.S. Sierra Nevada* and the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, each under different owners, alternated in the connecting service between San Francisco and Portland, and a few other ships plied the route as well.

On January 4, 1864, this was printed in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*:

> The steamer *Sierra Nevada*, which arrived on Wednesday, brought down about $80,000 in silver bricks—the first considerable amount of that metal from Owyhee, in southwestern Idaho.[6] There are two qualities of bullion, one lot being worth $3.25 per ounce,[7] and the other $6.40 per ounce. About four-fifths of the amount was of the former quality.... Some of the sanguine Idahoans are predicting that their young Territory is to excel Washoe [the Virginia City and Comstock Lode district of Nevada] as a silver producing country. The facilities, such as wood and water, are said to be abundant in Owyhee.

The same newspaper included this on January 13, 1864:

> An Oregon correspondent...relates the following of a silver-mining result in that state, worth, at $12 the ounce, $158,000:
>
> "A few days since, the largest pile of the precious metals my eyes ever beheld came down from the Owyhee country.

[1] Quite a prediction, this!

[2] Fred W. Wilson, "The Lure of the River." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 34, 1933.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 11 (chronicle of events)

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Leslie M. Scott, "The Pioneer Stimulus of Gold," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, 1917.

[6] Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, p. 406: "[Owyhee is] the name of one of the richest mining districts of the United States, in Idaho, which originally derived the mellow name from a Sandwich Island." Thus, Idaho's Owyhee is equivalent to what we now know as Hawaii.

[7] Silver was worth slightly over $1.20 per ounce at the time and gold about $18 per ounce (subject to commissions and exchange rates); it is seen that a typical ounce of "silver" from Owyhee had its greater *value* in its gold content, but its greater *weight* in silver.

The bricks, 12 in number, came from the Oro Fino and Morning Star ledges, and belonged to Moore & Fogus, who own the mill at which they were turned out. The metal rates as silver, although some of it contains sufficient gold to be valued at $12 per ounce. There was in all, I think 1,100 pounds of that stuff. Seeing these great silver bars piled upon one another in the form of wild-turkey pens or log cabins, on the floor of the banking house of Ladd & Tilton, made this metal, hitherto considered and denominated precious, appear as common as pig iron."

Nearly every trip down from Victoria and Portland continued to include treasure, typically in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, the amount of which was often recorded in the newspapers. Representative accounts include these (arrival and/or departure dates of the *Brother Jonathan* as noted):[1]

1864, October 13 (arrival date in San Francisco): "Steamer *Brother Jonathan* arrived from Victoria and Portland with a large number of passengers and $369,910 in treasure."[2]

1864, November 21 (arrival date in San Francisco): "The steamer *Brother Jonathan* arrived from the North with a large number of passengers and treasure amounting to $401,000." On the *next day* this occurred: "Over $400,000 in gold dust was deposited in the U.S. Branch Mint, being the largest amount deposited in any day since its establishment."

1864, December 7 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* treasure $149,000. 6,108 boxes apples, 2,138 sacks flour, 315 sacks oats, 600 sacks bran, 503 sacks potatoes, 794 sacks wheat, 25 packages butter, 16 packages eggs, 5 packages bacon, 97 hides, 11 sacks timothy seed, 30 packages merchandise $15,000." • Same trip: 1864, December 14 (arrival date in San Francisco): "The *Brother Jonathan* arrived from up the Coast with numerous passengers and $400,200 in treasure."[3]

1864, December 28 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* treasure $168,500, 6,000 boxes apples, 5 cases Will[amette] woolen goods and other articles, amounting to nearly 700 tons $15,000."

1865, April 1 (arrival date in San Francisco): "The *Brother Jonathan* arrived from the North with a treasure amounting to $46,000."

1865, April 17 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* for San Francisco, treasure $57,000, 100 boxes apples, 750 qr sacks flour, 500 sacks wheat, 300 sacks oats and feed, and 20 tons miscellaneous freight, value $19,600."

1865, May 28 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* treasure $58,000, 2,300 sacks wheat, 9,000 qr sacks oats, 1,300 boxes apples, 200 sacks middling [pork or bacon products], 800 sacks bran, 50 tons hides, case goods, etc., making in all a cargo of 600 tons, value $55,000." • Same trip: 1865, June 3 (arrival date in San Francisco): "The *Brother Jonathan* arrived from the North with treasure amounting to $347,400."[4]

1865, June 24 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* treasure $305,000." • Same trip: 1865, June 30 (arrival date in San Francisco): "The *Brother Jonathan* arrived from the North with treasure amounting to $91,685."[5]

1865, July 14 (departure date from Portland): "Steamship *Bro. Jonathan,* treasure $252,651."

Good times continued. In 1864 the firm of Wells, Fargo & Co. alone shipped by steamship an astounding $6,200,000 in gold from Portland.[6] In 1865 that firm's figure was $5,800,000.

During the same time that Oregon and Idaho were yielding large amounts of precious metal, the gold finds in the Fraser River district of British Columbia were dwindling. Writing in 1865, an American journalist commented:[7]

> The Fraser River gold diggings in British Columbia are about worked out now. Few besides Chinamen are washing in them this year; and the rush of the white miners is to the more distant and better paying regions of Carriboo and Kootenay, though these, as all others on the Coast, are overshadowed this season by the fame of Idaho and Montana.
>
> Victoria is the chief commercial point for these two British provinces and in part, also, for the Washington Territory, and much profitable smuggling goes on across these waters and imaginary territorial lines into the United States. There are fewer Americans in Victoria than formerly. They are stepping out, as its prosperity seems waning....

In Oregon in 1865

In 1865, Oregon and the first 300 miles of the Columbia River continued to be scenes of growth and prosperity. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* increased its role as a prime factor in the trade and carried cargoes of machinery, provisions, and supplies to Portland, where they were off-loaded and sent upriver for further distribution. The interior towns continued their growth, and there was a steady call for mining and ore-refining equipment, lumber mill supplies, and, increasingly, machines for manufacturing industries such as woolen mills.

Albert D. Richardson, traveler to this and other western areas, described what he saw during a visit there in the summer of 1865. Schuyler Colfax, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, was taking a grand tour of the Oregon district and other regions in the West to evaluate their economic and social status. Richardson, an accomplished re-

[1] Items under "arrival date": Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1865-6, retrospective of events from summer 1864 through summer 1865. Items following "departure date": *The Portland Directory for the Year Commencing January 1866,* pp. 15-16; "Exports from Portland for the year ending December 1, 1865."

[2] Soon thereafter, on October 28, 1864, the *Brother Jonathan* carried $500,000 in gold from Portland down to San Francisco.

[3] The *Oregon Statesman,* dispatch datelined San Francisco, December 14, 1864, included this related account: "The Oregon steamer *Brother Jonathan* brings $400,200 in gold, besides $150,000 in the hands of passengers." As can be seen, there are differences between the Portland and San Francisco accounts. Concerning the trip down from Portland, treasure and other items may have been picked up in Victoria and not noted in Portland.

[4] Most of the treasure was probably loaded aboard in Victoria.

[5] Perhaps the main thing that can be gained from contemporary newspaper accounts concerning "treasure" is that they were inconsistent!

[6] Leslie M. Scott, "The Pioneer Stimulus of Gold," *Oregon Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 18, 1917.

[7] Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent,* 1865, p. 218.

Schuyler Colfax, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, toured the Pacific Northwest in the summer of 1865. Among members of his entourage were two men who later wrote books about their experiences, Albert D. Richardson of the New York *Tribune* and Samuel Bowles of the *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican.*

In 1868 Colfax was the running mate of U.S. Grant on the Republican ticket. Portraits of both are shown on this ferrotype issued during the campaign.

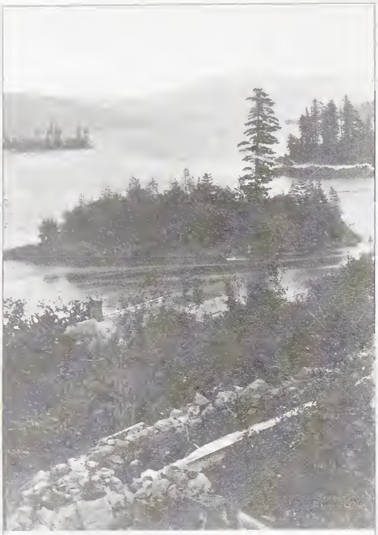
porter for the *New York Tribune* and writer of true life Civil War adventure stories, was on hand as an invited guest. Colfax was feted in a grand manner with receptions and speeches, for it was not often that a dignitary from the seat of the federal government in Washington, D.C., traveled to the remote areas of the Pacific Northwest. Colfax and many members of his group went from the Pacific Northwest to San Francisco, arriving there on July 1.

In July 1865 Richardson stayed behind in Oregon, went to Portland, made an excursion up the Columbia River, then took a steamer trip to Victoria, after which he returned to Portland to connect with the S.S. *Sierra Nevada* bound for San Francisco, arriving at the end of the month. His ticket for passage cost $45 for the 740 mile journey. Richardson described Oregon as it was in July 1865:[1]

> Oregon is prolific in grain, grass, fruit and timber. As in all new countries, the bountifulness of nature is most strikingly exhibited in human life. Old communities are full, and children comparatively rare. New countries must be peopled, and children abound. About the log houses everywhere on our frontier, from six to a dozen white-headed babies attest the fact. Oregon is specially blest. A Marion County lady at 61 years of age became the mother of an infant. Another had two children born within 10 months. The former United States law regulating public lands in this state gave 320 acres to an unmarried settler and 640 to him who had a wife. As the young Territory had five times more men than women, girls married very young; and some became mothers at 13 and 14.
>
> Salem, the pleasant capital of the state, is a village of 2,000 people, on the Wallamet [Willamette] River. Here we take a little steamer for Oregon City, where we debark to ride a mile upon a wooden railroad, past broken picturesque falls, with eternal clouds of mist winding across the broad river. The silvery water contrasts impressively with the deep gloom of environing rocks and somber hills. Near the falls is a great brick woolen factory, the fourth in the state.
>
> Below the cascade, a second steamer waits to bear us a few miles further, to Portland, the metropolis of Oregon. Many attempts have been made to found a city at the mouth of the Columbia, which seemed the natural point for a commercial center. But those mysterious laws which determine the sites of cities vetoed the resolution and established the coming town on the Wallamet, 12 miles above its junction with the Columbia and 130 above the Columbia's mouth.
>
> We found Portland a pleasant, straggling, growing city of 5,000 people, on the smooth, glassy transparent river, broken just above by a mid-channel island of vivid, drooping foliage. The town is enclosed on the three land sides by an amphitheater of symmetric hills covered with tall, dark pines. At the great wharves are river steamboats, sailing vessels from San Francisco, Sandwich Islands, China and the Atlantic coast; and ocean steamers which ply to Vancouver Island and to San Francisco. On the lower business streets there are ample brick blocks; above there are graceful churches, schoolhouses and spacious frame dwellings, scattering into an irregular fringe of little cottages and rough cabins far up among hillside stumps.
>
> The largest and most enthusiastic concourse of citizens we had seen since leaving New York was waiting to receive Mr. Colfax. The Stars and Stripes everywhere flying; streets filled with busy, intelligent faces; fine horses with light carriages trotting up the macadamized road along the river toward a delightful suburban resort known as the White House. Driving is *the* pastime of the Pacific coast, and horse-flesh its ruling passion.
>
> Portland has a heavy trade and is full of thrift and enterprise. It was founded in 1845 by two wandering Yankees, Prettigrove from Portland, and Lovejoy from Boston. Each desired to give it the name of his birthplace; and they finally decided the vexed question by tossing up the only coin in their possession—a rusty copper. Heads won; wherefore the metropolis of the North Pacific is Portland, not Boston![2] Having no great city within 700 miles, it is the grand support-point for Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Just before our arrival a corner lot 50 feet by 100 sold for $20,000 in gold.

[1] *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, pp. 399-403.

[2] Similarly, in *The Numismatist*, April 1906, a commentary by Farran Zerbe related this: "The first persons to build a log cabin in Portland (Oregon) on the original townsite of 640 acres were A.L. Lovejoy and F.W. Pettygrove [*sic*] in the winter of 1844-1845. The embryo settlement amid the towering fir and cedar timber, was named Portland in 1845. Lovejoy, a native of Massachusetts, wanted to call it Boston. Pettygrove, a native of Maine, wanted to call it Portland. Owing to a disagreement, Pettygrove suggested that the question be decided by tossing a copper cent, 'head and tail,' and produced one coined in 1835. Lovejoy agreed, the coin was tossed three times, and Pettygrove's choice—head—came up twice, hence Portland was adopted as the name of the city. The original coin, which the Oregon Historical Society hoped someday to add to its collection, is now in the possession of one of Mr. Pettygrove's descendants."



Islands in the Columbia River. (Continent Stereoscopic Co., New York, late nineteenth century)

With a party of Portlanders we made an excursion up the Columbia, starting upon the fine steamer *New World*. She used to run upon the Hudson; but through debt and ill-luck fell into the clutches of the New York sheriff. Her captain, having secretly provisioned her for a long voyage, seduced that functionary into a little ride down the harbor; carried him beyond his own jurisdiction; and then offered him the option of going ashore or a free passage to California. The outwitted sheriff landed; but the *New World* continued around the Horn, to the hopeless bereavement of her creditors.

Old geographers called this stream Oregon—"the river of the West"—and the great state still fittingly bears that earlier and better name. The Columbia is six miles wide at its mouth and one mile wide a hundred miles above. Clear, blue, glassy, dotted with little islands of greenest foliage, and broken by dangerous rapids which make steamers shake like rocking chairs, the Columbia is unrivaled upon our continent, in grandeur and magnitude. The Hudson no more compares with it than does the Arkansas with the Hudson. Beside it rise grand abrupt mountains, deeply wooded with firs, crowned with stupendous rocks, carpeted by yellow moss, girdled with strands of snowy cloud, and streaked with waterfalls of perfect whiteness.[1]

Cape Horn is a columnar wall of basaltic stone, at some points 700 feet in height—the Palisades[2] on a larger scale. Over many vast upright rocks little falls take bold leaps, dissolving into spray before reaching the bottom. Where the steep bank of velvet grass and pine-crowned rocks is one-third of a mile high, Horsetail Fall, softened by delicate mist, hangs like an exquisite strand of snowy hair, broken only once in a descent of 360 feet, "a strip of silver in a fringe of green." Castle Rock, a solitary basaltic dome surrounded by water and quite isolated from the shore, rises grand and gloomy for 800 feet. Tall pines find root among its imperceptible fissures and on its bare summit.

Here we reach the Lower Cascades, impassable for boats, and take a steam railway along the rugged bank for five miles. Our train passes a little log block house where in 1856 Indians besieged a party of white men for two days. They were finally routed in a dashing charge by a modest young lieutenant of the United States army, whose name was Phil. Sheridan. At the outbreak of the rebellion he confidentially assured a friend of his determination to win a captain's commission or die in the attempt!

Lincoln thought it would fill the measure of his wildest ambition to be made vice president! Grant only aspired to the city council of Galena, that he might have a new sidewalk from the depot! Sheridan merely hoped to become captain of a company![3]

How little do we know of what we are,
How less, of what we may be!

After leaving the railway we took the new steamer *Oneonta*, built on the ground, and elegantly furnished. She is 200 feet long, and cost $80,000. Upon her we steamed up the current for five hours to the flourishing town of Dalles, the third [largest] in the state, containing 2,500 inhabitants.

Here are the second impassable rapids, and the second railroad of 14 miles, built at heavy expense, and accompanied by a telegraph wire. Here for 10 miles are the Dalles (flagstones) of the Columbia, worthy of the prominence given them by Washington Irving, Lewis and Clark, and other early writers, as the most noteworthy feature of all this curious region.[4] The river, above and below so broad and glassy, is here of fathomless depth, compressed into one tenth its usual limits; and even this narrow stream is broken by scores of dark brown rocks. Boiling, swelling and hissing, the torrent rushes through its close, tortuous eddies and troughs, whirlpools and shooting rockets of water, beating out its life against prison walls. On the bank, immense drifts of sand, white as snow, prove most serious obstructions to the locomotive.

On the flat shore rocks are the bark lodges of Wascopum Indians; naked children, with stomachs distended like bladders, rolling and running in the sand; filthy, repulsive women, who seem hardly members of the human race, bearing bundles of faggots upon their heads; and men at the water's edge spearing savory salmon, often weighing 25 pounds each. On the south in full view towers Mount Hood, the grandest peak on our continent.

Richardson went on to relate that he took another railway past the rapids, arriving at Celilo, a village of a dozen dwellings at Celilo Falls, at which point "on the riverbank is

[1] From the 1930s onward the beauty of the Columbia River was destroyed by a series of hydroelectric dams built by the Army Corps of Engineers.
[2] Vertical rock formations along the Hudson River in New Jersey, across the river from New York City.
[3] Philip Henry Sheridan later went on to [illegible] Civil War [illegible].
[4] As a consequence of damming up the [illegible] of America's [illegible] natural attractions, these, too, were covered over when the former Columbia *River* became a *lake*. The merits of the [illegible] of the Columbia gorge have been widely discussed, with proponents pointing to positive aspects such as flood control and the generation of electricity without the use of fossil fuel.

The Dalles section of the Columbia River. (Continent Stereoscopic Co., New York, late nineteenth century)

the largest warehouse in the United States, over 1,100 feet long, built to receive the heavy Idaho freights," no doubt including much that had been shipped to Portland on the *Brother Jonathan*. He then embarked on the *Owyhee*, a 120-foot steamer built above the rapids at a cost of $32,000.[1]

Richardson's fellow traveler with the Schuyler Colfax party, Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Republican*, also described Portland as he saw it in the summer of 1865:[2]

> Portland is the largest town of Oregon, stands sweetly on the banks of the Willamette.... Ships and ocean steamers of the largest class come to its harbor; from it spreads out a wide navigation to the interior of the Columbia and its branches. [illegible] Here centers a large and increasing trade, not only for the Willamette valley, but for the mining regions of eastern Oregon and Idaho, Washington Territory on the north and parts even of British Columbia. Even Salt Lake, too, has taken groceries and dry goods through this channel. And ... find it advantageous to pay more and continually, and ... the natural and navigable water communication through the far extending Columbia.
>
> The population of Portland is about 7,000.[3] They keep Sunday as we do in New England, and as no other population this side of the Missouri now does.[4] Real estate ... is quite high, $400 a front foot for lots 100 deep on the main business streets, without the buildings.... A single daily paper [the Oregonian] has 2,500 circulation, with a weekly edition of 3,000 more. Altogether Portland has the air and the face of a prosperous, energetic town, with a good deal of eastern leadership and tone to business and society and morals.

At the time, a leading place of public accommodation in Portland was advertised as follows:[5]

> Arrigoni's Hotel, corner of Front and Stark streets, Portland, Oregon. S.N. Arrigoni, proprietor. This is the oldest established hotel in Portland, and for location, comfort and convenience, second to none on the Pacific coast. It is situated in the business portion of the city, and has connected with it a reading room, bar room, bath-house and barber's shop. It is convenient to the steamboat landings, Post Office, and express offices.
>
> The California Stage Company have their office on the lower floor, and dispatch stages daily to all parts of Oregon and California. Also, Oregon & California Telegraph Company's office. The rooms are large, well ventilated and supplied with the best spring beds. The table is supplied with all the delicacies the markets of the Pacific coast afford. The servants are attentive and prompt. The hotel is kept open all night. Breakfast is ready in time for the stages and boats. Arrigoni's Hotel is the largest in the state, and the proprietor is determined to keep up with the times, and is determined, in every respect, to make his hotel the very best on the Pacific Coast.

Mr. Arrigoni had a pretty niece, about 17 years of age, Miss Mary Berry. A resident of San Francisco in July 1865, Mary planned to come to Portland to visit later in the month and would secure a ticket aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

The Dalles Mint

Upstream on the Columbia River from Portland was the bustling gold-rush town of The Dalles, described by Richardson as the third largest in the state, with 2,500 residents.[6] Dozens of taverns, hotels, and a few bordellos catered to the tastes and money of the miners. Gold from the eastern reaches of the state and from the Owyhee district of Idaho came through the thriving little city, and in due course much of it was shipped down the Columbia and put aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* bound from Portland to San Francisco, where the Mint processed the metal into coins.

[1] Travel aboard passenger steamers on the Columbia River was said to be quite luxurious. This account of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's operations in the same year, 1865, is from Miles F. Potter, *Oregon's Golden Years*, p. 54: "By 1865 the company operated 29 ships on all sections of the river. Many of them were floating palaces—expensive carpets, beautiful cut glass chandeliers, elegant hardwood fixtures, and fancy bars with glittering mirrors. Nearly all the furnishings had been shipped around the Horn. The O.S.N. also operated 13 schooners and four barges on the river, about half of them below the Cascade rapids." • Information about O.S.N. can be found in Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, Vol. II. 1848-1888, especially p. 481.

[2] Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 1865, pp. 183-184.

[3] 2,000 more than the 5,000 estimate given by Richardson. At the time any population count would have been approximate, due to the itinerant nature of many of the people there and the lack of carefully kept statistics.

[4] Many writers from the East felt compelled to comment on the perceived lack of "churchliness" observed in the West. Bowles went on to comment that Methodists were the leading denomination in Portland, followed by Presbyterians, *et al.*

[5] *The Portland Directory for the Year Commencing January 1865.*

[6] "The" is an integral part of the name of the town, The Dalles, and in most (but not all) accounts the "T" is capitalized and the city is alphabetized under T. The flagstone area in the Columbia River was called, variously, the (lower case) dalles and The Dalles.

Proud of its new commercial status following the gold discoveries of the 1860s, Oregon hoped to follow the lead of California and have its own federal mint.

The town of The Dalles as it appeared in the summer of 1865 was described by Samuel Bowles.[1] In one of those coincidences of history, both Richardson and Bowles, traveling with Colfax, wrote *books* about their trip, and both described life in Oregon in July 1865. All the more remarkable, both were on the same voyage aboard the *S.S. Sierra Nevada* on July 30, 1865, from Portland down to San Francisco, and anticipated meeting the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* off the coast of northern California. From Bowles' narrative:

> At the Dalles lies the second [most populous] town in Oregon, bearing the name of The Dalles, and holding the population of 2,500. It is the *entrepot* for the scattered mines in eastern Oregon, for we are now on the eastern slopes of the mountains and very much also for the Boise and Owyhee mines in Idaho.
>
> The miners come in here to winter, send their earnings to here, and buy here many of their supplies. Two million dollars in gold dust came in here from eastern Oregon and Idaho in the single month of June last [1865]. The town is ambitious of that unnecessary adjunct, a mint, and the Oregon politicians have even wheedled Congress out of a preliminary appropriation for one.

To Oregonians in the 1860s the concept of an indigenous mint was a good one, Bowles' comments notwithstanding.[2] As was true in California, there was a shortage of coins in circulation in Oregon and the adjacent Washington Territory. Also similar to the situation in California, there were no bank notes or paper scrip to help with the needs of commerce. Both Portland and The Dalles (also called Dalles City) were in contention as a mint location, but The Dalles won, much to the consternation of the larger city.

On July 4, 1864, the 38th Congress passed "An Act (13 Stat. L., 382) to establish a Branch Mint of the United States at Dalles City in the state of Oregon for the coinage of gold and silver."[3] To provide for planning and construction the sum of $100,000 was appropriated.

Advocates of Portland continued to press their claim for a mint, resulting in legislators of the adjacent Territory of Washington passing a resolution on December 20, 1864, and sending it to the House of Representatives in Washington.[4] The text noted:

> Your memorialists, the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Washington, respectively beg leave to present to your consideration the following preamble and prayer:
>
> Whereas Congress did, at the 38th Session, enact a law providing for the erection and establishment of a United States branch mint at Dalles, Wasco County, Oregon;
>
> And whereas rich and extensive fields of gold and silver are being constantly discovered and developed in the territories of Montana, Idaho, and Washington, which fully justifies the belief that the mines embraced in these territories are destined to produce a greater demand of gold and silver than the entire remaining portion of the Pacific coast;
>
> And whereas the transportation of the precious metals produced in these territories to the branch mint in San Francisco is attended with great danger, loss of time, and expense, the high rates of express charges being ruinous to both the mining and mercantile community, thereby compelling the miner to sell his dust at a heavy discount on the intrinsic value;
>
> And whereas the aforesaid city of Dalles is situated at a point where all the roads leading to the different mining districts in eastern Oregon, Washington, and Idaho territories concentrate, thereby rendering the said city more accessible, eligible, and convenient than any other place in the State of Oregon;
>
> And whereas it sometimes happens that during severe winters the lower Columbia River is closed, and the Cascade Mountains between Dalles and Portland rendered practically impassable, thereby suspending communication and preventing travel below Dalles, while the said city can be reached by land travel from the mining districts at all seasons of the year; all of which facts, in the opinion of our memorialists, confirms the wisdom of your choice in the selection of said city of Dalles as the most advantageous place for the location of a branch mint;
>
> And whereas powerful and persistent efforts are being made by certain parties to effect a repeal of the law locating the said branch mint at Dalles, and to establish it at Portland, Oregon, which purpose, if accomplished, will prove a serious detriment and disadvantage to the entire population of eastern Oregon and the territories of Washington, Idaho, and Montana:
>
> Therefore, your memorialists would respectfully and earnestly pray that your honorable body will immediately appoint commissioners for the erection and establishment of the branch mint at Dalles, Wasco County, Oregon, and that measures be adopted to finish and put it into practical operation at the earliest period of time possible....

This seemed to settle the matter, and shortly thereafter, William Logan, long a resident and businessman in The Dalles, Oregon, was appointed as superintendent of The Dalles Mint. Seeking to further the project, Logan and his wife Izza booked passage on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* from San Francisco on July 28, 1865, headed to Portland and from that point to their hometown to plan for the new mint. The couple had been in California to seek medical assistance—successfully, as it developed—for an illness which had troubled Mrs. Logan for three months.

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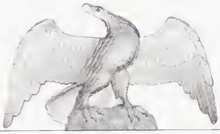
1 Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 1865, pp. 188. The territory beyond The Dalles including the 15-mile railway connection to Celilo is discussed on pp. 188-190.

2 Sources include James J. Padden, "The Mint We Almost Had," *The Numismatist*, 1959.

3 The year before, the Act of March 3, 1863, established the Carson City Mint near the vast Comstock Lode, discovered in 1859, which was yielding vast amounts of silver and gold; the Carson City facility opened for business in early 1870.

4 38th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Misc. Doc. No. 27.

Chapter Eleven



Before the Brother Jonathan's *Departure*

A View of the City and Its Services

Albert D. Richardson, who had come to California in late July 1865 from Portland with Samuel Bowles aboard the aforementioned *S.S. Sierra Nevada,* described San Francisco:[1]

> It is far more cosmopolitan than any other American city except New York. It has four hotels which would be creditable to any metropolis in the world. At these, and along Montgomery Street, one sees that curious mingling of faces from every quarter of the globe, which is characteristic of Broadway. Before leaving home, I could remember only one personal acquaintance in California. But on arriving I was surprised to meet scores of familiar countenances—men whom I supposed dead, men whom I fancied still in the East, and men long forgotten. As good Bostonians when they die are said to go to Paris, all other Americans good and bad must go to California....
>
> San Francisco is the inevitable business center for all the interior west of Salt Lake; and for the long coast from Behring's Straits to Patagonia. A brisk trade also is springing up with the Sandwich Islands, Japan and China.
>
> Nature ordained this queen of the Pacific a great metropolis—the second city on the American continent. Burned to the ground six times within 18 months, her growth was not stopped, nor her prosperity impaired; and if a new earthquake were to shake down every building, not leaving one stone upon another, the town would soon be as large and as vigorous as ever. I can but barely touch upon the manufacturing, farming, fruit-growing and mining of this wonderful young state.

Richardson also commented on a popular local express company, the United States mail, and newspapers:

> The Wells-Fargo Express, which combines the mail, banking, and express business, and has about 100 offices and pervades every railway, steamboat, and stage route, and every town and mining camp on the Pacific coast. It illustrates the superiority of private enterprise. When its messengers run on the very steamer, or the same railway carriage, with those of the United States mail, three fourths of the business men entrust it with their letters, which are invariably delivered in advance of the government consignments. In San Francisco, Mr. Colfax dropped a note into the mail, making an engagement for the next week with a gentleman residing a mile from our hotel. Three days after the appointed time his friend appeared and explained:
>
> "I have but just received your letter. Why didn't you send it by Wells Fargo?"
>
> ...The uniform charge for delivering letters is 12½¢. The company carries them only in stamped envelopes, thus paying a government tax of 3¢ on every half ounce. Yet the Post Office department constantly endeavors to suppress it. Twenty-five years ago, when postage was 25¢ for distances over 400 miles, and Hall's Express carried letters from Boston to New York for 5¢, the authorities did their utmost to stop him, but with Daniel Webster for his counsel, he defeated them and hastened the era of cheap postage.
>
> When the operations of the Wells Fargo company were confined to the Pacific coast and the steamers between San Francisco and New York, it transported 2,300,000 letters annually. Two and a-quarter millions of writers paid 9¢ extra *not* to have their letters pass through the 'Circumlocution Office!' What stronger proof of the folly of government's conveying letters? It might with as much propriety sell groceries, convey heavy freight, or deliver washing. Abolish the Post Office department. Leave this, like other carrying trade, open to private competition and the mail service of the United States would be performed 50% cheaper and 100% better than it is today.
>
> The San Francisco *Alta California* and the *Evening Bulletin* print from 7,000 to 9,000 daily and earn from $20,000 to $40,000 per annum. Their terms (in specie) are $18 per year for the dailies; $5 for the weeklies; single copies, 10¢. Advertising rates are very high. The *Alta* once cleared $80,000 in 30 months. The *Sacramento Union,* also successful, is one of the very best newspapers on the continent.

[1] *Beyond the Mississippi,* 1867, pp. 447-455.

Montgomery Street, one of San Francisco's main commercial thoroughfares, in 1855. By this time the city had been rebuilt from several fires, and many imposing and substantial bank and office blocks lined the streets. To the right is the office of Wells, Fargo & Co. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

Entertainment and Dining in July 1865

In July 1865, the popular and finely-appointed *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was a familiar part of the San Francisco scene, having been a news item for many years with her comings and goings regularly published in the local papers. No doubt in the month of July, many of her passengers and crew members would have experienced some of the following sights and events in the city. Thirteen years had passed since the *Brother Jonathan* first arrived in San Francisco.

Although bordellos were not openly advertised at the time, they still flourished, as they had since the early days of the Gold Rush. One of the most popular madams is said to have been Rosanna Keenan who maintained a staff of attractive young ladies to assist in providing pleasure to gentlemen callers. After all, in the category of "naughty" pastimes not much had changed since years earlier in 1853, when Elisha S. Capron commented on such places, noting that specific details were such they could not be printed in any book. Similarly, gambling casinos and card rooms were popular attractions but were not played up in newspapers or directories.

Several large "resorts," as they were called, beckoned to those wishing to spend an afternoon, an evening, or all day immersed in a world of entertainment, food, and drink. The Willows, operated by Frank Kelly, offered "private parlors...fitted up expressly for the comfort of small and select parties," perhaps an ideal place for a rendezvous.[1] The Willows also featured saloons (plural), restaurants (again plural), and "beautiful pleasure grounds." Further, "The bars are at all times well stocked with the finest brands of wines and liquors." Obviously, the enterprise was an early-day version of a theme park, at least for the adult set, for its attractions went on to invite the "lovers of sport" to become acquainted with Gus, who was "ever ready to shoot a friendly match with any and all comers" from a supply, always on hand, of "turkeys, chickens, and pigeons."

Those with a betting turn of mind were invited to pay a dollar for admission to W.F. Williamson's Bay View Park to watch "Trotting sweepstakes of $125–Two mile heats in harness."[2] Among the horses competing on a particular day were Harlem Boy, Laziness, Lady Beauty, Chuck Luck, and Oakland Pet.

Hayes Park, serviced by horse-drawn cars on Market Street, billed as a "fashionable and popular place of resort," beckoned with a fine restaurant, shuffle boards, ten-pin alleys, "flying horses" (merry-go-round), revolving swing rides, a gymnasium, and a shooting gallery. "Wines, liquors, and

[1] *Alta California*, July 12, 1865. This popular establishment had rebuilt following a major fire on January 12, 1864.
[2] *Alta California*, July 13, 1865.

lxxx SAN FRANCISCO DIRECTORY.

BAY VIEW PARK,

HUNTER'S POINT,

(Near San Bruno Road—six miles Southeast from City Hall.)

This elegant Resort is now complete, and every accommodation Known to the Best

RACE COURSE

IN AMERICA OR EUROPE, CAN BE FOUND HERE.

THE

HOTEL

Is spacious and finely arranged for a splendid view; while every Department conforms to the modern style and wants of the public.

THE

STABLES

Are ample, and constructed in the very best style, for the grooming and general care of blooded stock.

A MAGNIFICENT

SHELL ROAD

Connects the Park with the Mission Dolores, and thence with the suburban streets and avenues. The public may rest assured that everything will be conducted in accordance with the rules governing

All First Class Race Courses.

GEORGE HEARST & CO.

PROPRIETORS.

W. F. WILLIAMSON,

Superintendent and Manager.

This advertisement for the popular Bay View Park noted that the facility was connected by a "magnificent shell road" (made of crushed seashells) to Mission Dolores. The latter place was a focal point in the early days of the Gold Rush for gruesome public spectacles, such as chaining a bear and bull together to see which would kill the other, and burying chickens in the ground, all except their heads, to see if horsemen could gallop by at full speed and snatch them up. George Hearst, the proprietor of Bay View Park, made a fortune in the Comstock Lode in Nevada and later became well known as a San Francisco newspaper man; his name still echoes today. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

602 SAN FRANCISCO DIRECTORY.

PHILADELPHIA BREWERY

Corner of Second and Folsom Streets,

SAN FRANCISCO.

WE TAKE THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY OF THANKING OUR Friends and Customers for the liberal support [illegible]

PHILADELPHIA BREWERY

And notify them that we have added to our Establishment

NEW AND EXTENSIVE BUILDINGS

By which we hope, through the greatly increased [illegible], now [illegible] by us, to furnish, as usual,

A SUPERIOR ARTICLE OF BEER,

That shall not only equal that previously furnished by us, but [illegible] them that we are determined to merit their continued patronage and support.

HOELSCHER & WIELAND.

Beer and wine flowed freely in San Francisco, which was said to have more saloons per capita than any other large city in the United States. Supplying the demand were several local establishments including the Philadelphia Brewery. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1864-5*)

cigars, 12¢," awaited patrons.[1] Further, there were "ample stabling accommodations under the charge of watchful grooms," although only the more well-to-do San Franciscans had their own horses and carriages at the time. Most people walked or used public transportation.

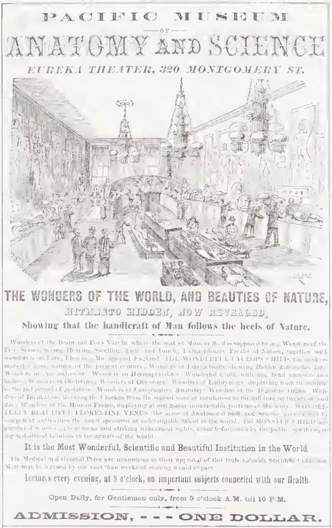
The Bivalve, an aptly-named oyster saloon and chop house at 640 Market Street, advertised that it had just been opened.[2] A "private entrance for ladies" was offered, a feature of many if not most fine restaurants in the city at the time. Oysters were the prime culinary delicacy in America at the time, and just about every eating establishment offered them in several styles of preparation. Wine was aplenty, mostly from the vineyards of California, which were expanding rapidly and furnishing significant exports out of the port of San Francisco. French champagne and other imported beverages were always on hand in the fancier establishments.

Less expensive was the Esperance Restaurant at 169 Commercial Street, which offered "the best and cheapest French meals for 50 cents" and featured "clean napkins every day."[3] The Clipper Restaurant offered for 10¢ a serving of coffee plus the patron's choice of several styles of rolls: French, German, Sweet, and hot.[4] Still other restaurants featured roasted or fried chicken and Mexican fare such as chile con carne and tamales.

For the avowed imbiber, Thompson's Wine Rooms, "without a rival in the way of whiskey," offered comfortable surroundings, supplemented by lunches served daily beginning at 11 a.m. under the auspices of "that inimitable caterer," Charley Dexter.

Temperance advocates, ministers, and other avowed non-partakers of whiskey and wine who wanted to sneak a nip now and then often purchased Dr. Rosenbaum's Celebrated

Temperance restaurants enjoyed a limited popularity in San Francisco over the years. Served were water, tea, coffee, flavored soda, and other non-alcoholic beverages. Families, including young children, were bid a warm welcome. Shown here is Winn's Branch, an ornate room of the 1850s. Through the curtain in the back is Winn's Branch Extension. (*Annals of San Francisco*)



Advertisement for the Pacific Museum, billed as suitable "for gentlemen only," an attraction that seems morbid, if the illustration is any indication of what awaited the eager male who parted with the requisite dollar to gain admittance. Mummies and corpse-like figures are shown in several cases in the center of the room while around the walls, under nude paintings, are more of the same. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

Stomach Bitters or Dr. Hufeland's Swiss Stomach Bitters, both of which were widely advertised as "medicines" in San Francisco, but which in actuality were little more than flavorings laced with a good measure of alcohol. Drake's Plantation Bitters, put up in bottles shaped like a log cabin, was another favorite.

Among non-alcoholic beverages, coffee was very popular, more so than tea. Several coffee houses in the city catered to this taste and also offered light menus. Several temperance restaurants enjoyed a popular patronage. Widely used tobacco products included cigars, pipes, and snuff. Billiard tables were common in the downtown district, as part of saloons and also as separate establish-

[1] *Ibid.*, July 20, 1865.
[2] *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 25, 1865.
[3] *Ibid.*, italics added.
[4] *Ibid.*

ments, often featuring the widely acclaimed Phelan's equipment.

For anyone seeking *free* entertainment, a walk down Dupont Street to North Beach would yield the scene of workmen tearing down the last brick windmill in the city, it along with others having been erected in 1858 or 1859, but not used in recent years when steam processing of flour came into favor.[1]

Maguire's Academy of Music invited subscriptions to the "new season of Italian opera," set to commence with prima donna Elvira Brambilla on stage on the 17th.[2] Meanwhile, Miss Lucy Simons was set to give her debut in *I Puritani!* on the 13th. Tickets for single performances were scaled at different prices, mostly 50¢ and $1, but private boxes could be secured for $15.[3] Maguire continued to be San Francisco's foremost impresario, a title he had held since the days of the Jenny Lind Theatre.

The Pacific Museum, "now open at the New Hall on Pine Street" (but soon to move to the Eureka Theatre on Montgomery Street), offered "for gentlemen only" an exhibition of anatomy, including the "life-like Florentine Venus which [is made up of] 700 pieces." The admission price of a dollar also included Egyptian mummies ("five in number"), an exhibit of the "evils resulting from tight lacing," and "important lectures."[4]

Hotels and Stopping Places

Many places of public accommodation were available in the summer of 1865. The newly opened Benton House, a three-story structure operated by T.J. Hanlon on the corner of First and Mission streets, advertised that its furniture was new and that there were "spring mattresses on all the

The Cosmopolitan, a showplace for travelers, as it appeared in the summer of 1865. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1864-5*)

The Oriental Hotel in its palmy days—the 1850s—when it was considered to be one of the city's finer places of accommodation. By 1865, when it was operated by saloonkeeper John C. Keenan, its reputation had diminished.

beds," this in contrast to the straw ticking commonplace in lodging houses.

Popular ever since its debut on August 31, 1864, and its first reception of guests on September 1, the Cosmopolitan Hotel at the corner of Bush and Sansome streets billed itself as "the largest hotel on the Pacific Coast," boasting 250 rooms.[5] Amenities included furniture imported from France, a large reading room, and "an elegant cabinet of mineral and geological specimens." Warm and cold baths were connected to "each suite of rooms," indicating that there must have been multiple facilities on each of the four floors. Further, the establishment offered "36 fire hydrants and a sufficiency of hose to deluge the house in a brief space of time." On the main floor the ceilings were 17 feet above the floor, imparting an air of elegance. Suites on the second floor had 14½-foot ceilings, while rooms on floors three and four measured 12½ and 11 feet respectively. In 1864 it was noted that the "cost, when finished and furnished, [will be] the round sum of $500,000 in gold coin. The cost of the building alone was $250,000." Facilities for guests included multiple dining rooms public and private, bar room, cigar room, gentlemen's reception room, billiard room, and on the third floor, "a dining room and play room for the use of children." Business must have been excellent, for it was soon announced that a five-story 100

[1] *Alta California*, July 26, 1865.

[2] This new addition to the Maguire facilities had opened on May 18, 1864.

[3] *Alta California*, July 12, 1865.

[4] *Alta California*, July 12, 1865. Tight lacing was practiced by many women, especially those in higher social circles, and involved wearing a corset which severely reduced the size of the midriff. Chinese women often bound their feet as children, with the result that they remained small in adulthood.

[5] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, advertisement on page [illegible]; also 1864-5 directory, editorial description on pp. [illegible]. Earlier, the original Rassette House (which burned), and the later and more elegant replacement which later changed its name to the Metropolitan Hotel, had been on the site. • In the San Francisco *Call*, September 1, 1864, Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain") reported that a preview of the building "caused that place to be besieged at an early hour yesterday evening by some 30,000 men, women, and children."

room addition would be built for a cost close to $125,000.

Samuel Bowles penned this view of a place that had been popular for a decade:[1]

> The What Cheer House is the famous resort for miners and mechanics, and it has made several fine fortunes in furnishing meals and beds at 50 cents each. Some of the features of this establishment are original and noteworthy.
>
> It has an especial office for receiving clothes to be washed and mended, a well chosen popular library with 5,000 volumes, full files of newspapers and magazines, an extensive and valuable cabinet of minerals, and a beautiful collection of stuffed birds, all for the accommodation and entertainment of its guests.
>
> Its reading room is generally well filled with plain, rough-looking men, each with book or newspaper in hand. The rule of the establishment is for every guest to buy a supply of tickets for meals and lodgings on his arrival, and the proprietor redeems with cash what have not been used up when the customer leaves.

Other stopping places ranged from the popular Occidental Hotel, where California Civil War hero Brigadier-General George Wright would secure a suite in July 1865, to, perhaps, its opposite both in name and present style, the formerly elegant Oriental Hotel operated by John C. Keenan and said by some to have been primarily a house of prostitution, presumably featuring his wife the aforementioned Rosanna Keenan, as madam. Both Wright and Rosanna Keenan would figure in the narrative of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

Inequality in 1865

Chinese people and African Americans were considered to be second class citizens, while the rights of Indians were generally nonexistent. In keeping with legislation elsewhere in the United States, neither white women nor any others of the distaff gender could vote. The state laws in 1865 included this:[2]

> All white male citizens are equal before the law of California, but Negroes, Indians, and Chinese are not permitted to vote or to testify in the courts against white men. In a criminal case, one-eighth Negro blood and one-half of Indian blood, in civil cases one-half of either, disqualifies a witness for testifying against a white man. Slavery is forbidden by the Constitution.

Reflective of the low esteem in which these minorities were held, passenger lists of steamers, accounts of public events, etc., while often listing many white people by name, often grouped minorities as "5 Chinese," "4 colored," or whatever. However, in business situations, hotels and restaurants, and places of public accommodation, facilities were open to all. By choice but also at least in part by default, the Chinese had their own enclave in San Francisco in 1865, complete with their own restaurants, gambling parlors, stores, hotels, social events, and other activities.

Indians were considered to be a particularly pesky element of California society, and in the hinterlands there were constant skirmishes with the people who, after all, had been there first. White people accorded the Indians few rights in society or law, a particularly sorry chapter in the history of the state—indeed, of the entire Pacific Northwest—in which Gen. George Wright had played a particularly dark role in what was, stated simply and clearly, government sponsored genocide of the Native American race.

Money and Prices

By the summer of 1865 the mix of coins in circulation in San Francisco still consisted only of gold and silver, but now with the mention of dimes, a federal denomination that had come into limited use in the area beginning in the late 1850s. Coins of this value were first struck at the San Francisco Mint in 1856.[3] Samuel Bowles, the traveling writer from Massachusetts, observed:[4]

> A drink at an aristocratic San Francisco bar is two bits (25¢), at a more democratic establishment one bit (10¢). There is no coin in use less than a dime; one of these answers as a "bit," two of them will pass for two bits, or 25¢, but the man who often offers two dimes for a quarter is voted a "bummer."
>
> It is not easy to make any exact comparison between the cost of living here and that at the East. Prices of everything, both here and there, are now much unsettled and fickle;[5] what might be true today would be wholly changed next week. Then here, there is a lack of settled and uniform habits or scales of living. An irregular, fitful existence prevails. In luck today, a man drinks champagne and flaunts his jewelry at the Occidental, while tomorrow, fortune frowning, he is sponging a dinner and drink from his friends and takes a 50¢ lodging at the What Cheer House.
>
> Large profits are generally demanded by the traders. Nothing is sold for less than "two bits" (25¢), and a 50¢ piece is the lowest coin that it is respectable to carry or throw to the man who waters your horse.
>
> As a general rule, no statement can be more intelligent than that it costs about as much to live in San Francisco in *gold* as it does in Boston and New York in *greenbacks*. Food, and consequently board, is cheaper there than here,[6] but dry goods and luxuries are generally more here. At the best hotels, the Occidental and Cosmopolitan, the price is $3 a day in gold, which is the same as $4.50 per diem in greenbacks at your first-class New York and Boston houses....
>
> Some quotations from the retail family markets will illustrate the prices of food and living here:
>
> Butter, 75¢ a pound, eggs 70¢ a dozen, hams and bacon 30¢ a pound, potatoes 1¢ to 2½¢ a pound, cauliflowers $1 to $1.25 per dozen, green peas 5¢ to 10¢ a pound, apples 4¢ to 10¢ a pound,... chickens 70¢ apiece, turkeys 30¢ a pound, ducks $1.50 to $2 a pair, quails $1.50 per dozen, rabbits 37¢ a

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[1] *Across the Continent*, 1865, p. 340-341. The earlier days of the What Cheer House are discussed in Chapter 2 of the present text.

[2] John S. Hittell, *The Resources of California*, 2nd edition, 1866, p. 350.

[3] Dimes had been produced elsewhere for many years including at the Philadelphia Mint intermittently from 1796 to date and at New Orleans from 1838 to 1860.

[4] Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent*, 1865, pp. 340-342.

[5] Due to unsettled conditions and mixed outlooks for the future in the months after the end of the Civil War.

[6] This comment does not logically follow the comparison of gold vs. greenbacks.

pair, fresh salmon 8¢ to 12¢ a pound, sea bass 5¢ to 10¢ a pound, codfish 10¢ to 12¢ a pound, oranges $4 to $4.50 per 100, and lard 33¢ a pound.

French and English dry goods at auction sold like this: Brussels carpets $1.25 to $1.67, velvet carpets $1.60 to $2.15, broadcloth $2.45 to $3, black silks $2.15 to $2.85.... These are wholesale rates, of course, and all the figures quoted are in *specie*.

A further reflection concerning the type of money that passengers carried aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in the summer of 1865 is this contemporary commentary concerning coins in circulation in San Francisco at the time:[1]

> There is no paper money in San Francisco.... In our banks there are great piles of double eagles, but no bank-notes are visible. Wherever you go, or whatever you do, or whatever you buy, you see only gold and silver; people do not think of paper. All large sums are paid in double eagles, and three fourths, if not nine-tenths, of our coin is of that size, which is far more convenient than the smaller coins common in other countries. A large proportion of our shipment of treasure abroad is in double eagles, and nine-tenths of the gold coined at the San Francisco Mint is in pieces of that size....
>
> No copper money is current, nor can anything be bought with a cent. The smallest coin commonly used is a dime; half dimes are rarely seen, and when used two of them are ordinarily put together to make a dime. The general sentiment among the people is opposed to the use of any coin less than a 10¢ piece, they like high wages and high prices, and think that the introduction of half dimes and cents would have a tendency to make us feel poor and to introduce low wages. Many retail dealers, even in the sale of candies and fruits, will therefore not take a half dime, and not a few persons would be ashamed to offer to purchase half a dime's worth of anything. A half dime is looked upon with more contempt and is far more rare in California than a cent is in New York. During the last three months, for instance, though I purchase articles every day, I have not seen a half dime. That coin is not made in our Mint, nor is there any demand for it.[2] Three-cent pieces, coppers, and nickels are never seen here except as curiosities, and are of no value to make investments.

News and Diversions in July 1865

On board the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's *S.S. Golden City* a Fourth of July celebration included toasts raised to the president of the United States, the Army and Navy, the heroes of the wars of 1776 and 1812, the states of the Pacific Coast, the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, the memory of George Washington, to "woman, God's last best gift to man," and the glory of the Pacific Steamship Company and the present vessel.[3]

During the last week of July, the Industrial Exhibition of 1865 was being prepared, and it was announced that "the Pavilion is now open for the reception of such machinery as will require steam power for its working."[4] Being readied for viewing were displays of agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce. The occasional event—earlier held in 1858, 1860, and 1864—provided a showcase for the products available in San Francisco, either by local origin or importation. Merchants and tradespeople often displayed eye-catching things such as expensive jewelry, large gold nuggets, and at an earlier show, a 2,000-pound cheese which viewers were advised would be available in servings at the What Cheer House after the event closed.[5]

Among ideal souvenirs of California to be sent to the folks back home were photographic cards, such as those prepared by the studio of Kellogg & Hamilton on Montgomery Street and sold for 25¢ each in dozen lots. Small gold tokens of 25¢ and 50¢ denominations sold by local jewelers and novelty shops were always popular reminders of the Golden State.

Petroleum replaced gold in some news stories as the latest, greatest potential for wealth, and advertisements were posted for oil-well equipment, including by Coffey & Risdon, who recently "completed two sets of tools and machinery...-from drafts and specifications received direct from the oil regions of Pennsylvania."[6] It was related that crude petroleum from America (probably mostly from Pennsylvania) had been purchased by English companies for about $75 per ton, fractionated and distilled, and sold for the equivalent of $250 per ton.[7] Discoveries had been made along the north coast of the state, including in Humboldt Bay south of Crescent City. However, the main fuel in use in commercial buildings and on steamships was coal which was imported in large quantities from the East, Washington Territory, and across the Pacific from Sydney, Australia. On July 25 the Marsh Creek Petroleum Company, intending to operate in Contra Costa County, California, filed a certificate of incorporation for $1 million.[8]

In July 1865, the most popular ways to travel from one side of the country to the other were by steamer (connecting across Panama) or overland. Regarding the latter, William Shew, a correspondent from New York City contributed this to the *Alta California*, and it was published on the 27th:

> For the information of your readers who may contemplate an overland trip from California, I will give some statistics relative to such a journey.... I made the trip in 22 traveling days from San Francisco to Boston.
>
> Through tickets by the stage line cannot be obtained, but the regular way fare is required on each section of the route. All expenses on the western division to Salt Lake City are payable in gold and silver coin, and east of Salt Lake in currency. ...

[1] John S. Hittell, *The Resources of California*, 2nd edition, 1866, pp. 337-338.

[2] In actuality, the San Francisco Mint first struck half dimes in 1863.

[3] *Alta California*, July 11, 1865.

[4] *Alta California*, July 21, 1865.

[5] A brief history of the Mechanics' Institute, sponsor of the exhibition, is given in *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 565.

[6] *Alta California*, July 21, 1865.

[7] *Alta California*, July 13, 1865, "The Petroleum Interest in California."

[8] *Alta California*, July 26, 1865. Oil was hardly new to Californians, and many accounts of the 1840s mentioned beaches blackened by petroleum residue seeping from the sea.

Fare from San Francisco to Sacramento: $5.
State room and supper: $3.
Fare from Sacramento to Virginia City [Nevada]: $25.
Two meals: $2.
Fare from Virginia City to Salt Lake City: $100.
Ten meals, five days: $10.
Total payable in gold: $145.
•
Fare from Salt Lake City to Atchison: $350.
26 meals, 13 days, $1.50 each: $39.
Fare and one meal from Atchison to St. Joseph: $2½.
Fare from St. Joseph to New York: $46.
Six meals, three days, to New York: $610.
Total payable in currency: $443½.

Reflecting popular tastes in periodicals brought from the East, on July 26 the *Alta California* printed a list of titles recently received by White & Bauer at their stand opposite the Post Office, these having been unloaded from the *S.S. Constitution* on the preceding day:

> *New York Herald, New York World, New York Day Book, New York News, Harper's Pictorial, Leslie's Pictorial, Chimney Corner, Forney's Press, Louisville Journal, St. Louis Republican, Boston Journal, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Times, Detroit Free Press, Baltimore Sun, Cincinnati Commercial, Cincinnati Enquirer, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Rochester Republican, Bangor Courier, Ohio Crisis, Providence Journal, Hartford Times, London Index, Godey's Magazine, Leslie's Magazine*, and *Mrs. Grundy* ("a new comic paper"; this cost 15¢ per issue *in the East*, or $7 per year).

The *Constitution's* passengers included this distinguished individual:

ARRIVAL OF THE GOVERNOR OF WASHINGTON TERRITORY:

> His Excellency, A. G. Henry, governor of Washington Territory, arrived from the East by the *Constitution*, and is now stopping at the Occidental hotel.

More would be written about Gov. Henry in the days to come.

In the Home

In the home, stereograph cards with views of distant cities and countries, of art and museums, and other subjects were very popular. Photographs of family members, including relatives back in the Atlantic states, provided reminders of the days of long ago. Lithographed prints by Currier & Ives, Britton & Rey, and others, colored by hand, were sold in many art and fancy goods shops and provided attractive decorations. Subjects covered just about everything imaginable, ranging from prominent political figures to pastoral and family scenes, children, to depiction's of disasters at sea. In the outlying districts, roving photographers with equipment stored in wagons took many pictures of mining scenes and life in the camps.

Reading continued to be a popular way to while away the evening hours. Most educated adults were quite up to date on the latest poems and books published in the East as well as the contents of popular magazines, especially *Harper's Monthly*. Statistics showed that San Franciscans were among the most widely read of all Americans in terms of per-capita use of newspapers. Whale-oil and coal-oil (kerosene) lamps furnished illumination, although the days of whaling were numbered.

Sewing machines were the most popular new home appliance of the era, and over a dozen stores featured large displays of different models. Pianos were sold by several retailers in town, as were harmoniums, the latter sometimes known as melodeons and featuring tuned metal reeds. Recitals on keyboard instruments as well as the violin or flute provided music in the sitting room or parlor.

Card games were favorites of all ages, while the younger set in particular enjoyed tricks and magic. Amateur theatricals were practiced as well-known plays, scenarios, and skits were dramatized.

Communications Problems with the East

Communications were interrupted on the telegraph line to the East on several occasions during July 1865. On the 12th a dispatch was sent to San Francisco from Salt Lake City, stating:[1]

> The eastern line is down beyond Three Crossings Station, some 250 miles beyond here, cut by Indians, of whom large numbers are reported to be in that vicinity. Efforts are being made to repair it, but it is not known how much damage is done east of there, and it is impossible to say when it will be in working order.

Telegraph problems continued on the connections to the Midwest and East. On July 26 the *Alta California* reported that "the eastern line has given out beyond Julesburg." On the 28th, this was printed in the same paper:

> The eastern line is down between Sweetwater and Platte Bridge. There are 72 soldiers at Sweetwater, and we cannot get them to send out an escort with the operator. I expect a cavalry force from Platte Bridge today, and will then have the line repaired. The Indians were seen around Platte Bridge on Tuesday evening, and at daybreak on Wednesday morning the line was cut. I have been unable to learn any particulars. – Agent.

Problems continued, with the result that over the next several weeks, communications from San Francisco to the East were sporadic.

The Month in Review

During the month of July these items made the news in San Francisco, a window on current events, from the 1st to the 28th:[2]

[1] Published in the *Alta California*, July 13, 1865, together with a notice dated the 12th: "Eastern line still out of order." A similar notice appeared in the issue of July 14.

[2] From the chronology printed in Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6, slightly edited.

July 1: Hon. Schuyler Coltax, ex-Speaker of U.S. House of Representatives, and party arrived on the *S.S. Sacramento* and were received at the wharf by the mayor and a committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors for that purpose. The Pacific Mail Steamship Co.'s *S.S. Colorado* arrived from New York City. (Albert D. Richardson and Samuel Bowles, writers who had been traveling with Colfax, remained in the Oregon and Washington Territory and came to San Francisco later in the month.)

July 3: The Pacific Mail's *S.S. Sacramento* left for Panama with treasure amounting to $957,571.03.

July 4: Rt. Rev. Alonzo Potter, Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, age 65, died on board the *Colorado*, of "Panama fever." The anniversary of the nation's independence was celebrated in style unsurpassed on any previous occasion–with salutes, a procession in which all the civic and military bodies were largely represented, an oration at the Metropolitan Theatre by John W. Dwinelle, Esq., and an illumination and fireworks in the evening.

July 7: Billy Mulligan, while laboring under the effects of delirium tremens, shot Jack McNabb and John Hart, the latter the foreman of Eureka Hose Company, at the St. Francis Hotel. After several attempts to capture him alive, Mulligan was shot and instantly killed by a police officer.

July 9: The funerals of Mulligan's victims, Hart and McNabb, were largely attended.

July 10: The *S.S. Sierra Nevada* arrived from the north with treasure amounting to $274,000.

July 12: Salutes were fired from all the U.S. military and naval posts in and around San Francisco in honor of the late Admiral Dupont.

July 15: A fire occurred about 12 o'clock p.m. in a large frame building on Davis Street occupied as a junk store. The loss amounted to about $5,000. The jury in the Brontes Colon piracy case brought in a verdict of acquittal.

July 16: A fire occurred about 12 o'clock p.m. in the Pacific Warehouse, on the corner of Broadway and Battery Street. The building with the greater portion of its contents was entirely destroyed. The estimated loss was about $400,000.

July 18: The *S.S. Golden City* left for Panama with treasure amounting to $1,474,077.58.

July 20: Great excitement was created by the arrival of the whale ship *Milo*, having on board the crews of the whale ships captured by the pirate *Shenandoah* in the North Pacific, nearly 200 men in number. A fire occurred in a furniture establishment 49 Third Street. Considerable damage was done by fire and water.

July 24: A fire broke out about 3 o'clock a.m. in the Winchester House, 409 Pacific Street. Damage totaled about $5,000, and a number of the inhabitants were severely burned.

July 26: The *S.S. John L. Stephens* arrived from the Mexican ports with $99,821.13 in specie.

July 27: The *Del Norte* arrived from the north with treasure amounting to $12,540.

July 28: A frame building, corner of Fell and Webster streets, was fired by an incendiary about 9 o'clock p.m. and burned to the ground.

Captain DeWolf

At the helm of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in the summer of 1865 was Samuel J. DeWolf, an experienced seaman. Born in Pictou, Nova Scotia, in 1822, DeWolf followed the sea beginning at the age of 16, first on the northeast coast of North America, possibly including service aboard the unfortunate *S.S. Lexington* in 1840, followed by 16 Atlantic crossings on the crew of a ship on the New York City to Liverpool run and service on other voyages. By the time that the Gold Rush beckoned in 1849, he had visited many ports around the world. Casting his fortune as a Forty Niner, DeWolf joined as a seaman aboard the clipper ship *Oxnard*, and as first officer helped take the vessel around Cape Horn to California.[1] After his arrival he was in the coastwise trade as captain of the brig *Fremont*. In 1854 he joined the newly formed California Steam Navigation Company, with which he was thereafter nearly continuously associated. In early 1865 he served as captain of the S.S. *Amelia* in the trade to Napa, north of San Francisco, after which he was in command of the *S.S. Orizaba* for a short time. Following these stints, he was reassigned to the *Brother Jonathan*.

Captain Samuel J. DeWolf of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. (Del Norte County Historical Society)

The *Brother Jonathan* Takes a Trip

A view of a typical round trip aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* in the summer of July 1865 is provided by a voyage that began on July 8th and concluded on the 20th.

[1] The *Oxnard* (erroneously called the *Omeand* by some later historians) arrived in November 1849. Part of its cargo consisted of over a dozen prefabricated wooden houses imported by William D. M. Howard (cf. Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, Vol. III, p. [illegible]). • The later voyage of the *Oxnard* included a run under the command of Captain [illegible] from New York to San Francisco, April 14, 185[illegible] to August [illegible], 185[illegible], an unimpressive (for a clipper ship) time of [illegible] days. • Additional biographical information, including more about the S.S. *Lexington*, is included under the DeWolf listing in Appendix III.

Map of California and the Pacific West illustrating the territory traveled by journalist Albert D. Richardson in the summer of 1865 in company with House of Representatives Speaker Schuyler Colfax and others. The coastline includes the route of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:* San Francisco, Crescent City on the coast to the north, Portland, and Victoria (at the top left on Vancouver Island). A line shows the *planned* route of the Central Pacific Railroad, the completion of which was four years distant in 1865. (*Beyond the Mississippi*)

After loading cargo aboard on the 7th and early in the morning of the 8th, the sidewheel steamer, with Captain DeWolf at the helm, left San Francisco at 11 a.m. She soon passed through the Golden Gate and was in the open water of the Pacific Ocean. The sea was fairly calm, the season was fairly warm, and in the absence of information to the contrary it can be assumed that all went well as she steamed past the northern coast of California and along the Oregon shore, possibly with a stop or two if there was a call for freight delivery or pickup.

On the 11th at 8:30 a.m., a few hours short of three full days at sea, she crossed the bar of the Columbia River, a sandy shoal which served as the dividing line between the river and the open sea. Later the same day the steamer docked at Portland to unload and receive passengers and cargo, remaining in port until 7:15 in the evening of July 14.[1]

Steaming down the Columbia River in the darkening hours, she "passed in the river, bound up, the brig *Sunny South* and the barquentine *Jane A. Falkenburg* and came into collision with the *Jane A. Falkenburg,* causing some damage."[2] The *Falkenburg* had a load of lumber aboard. Following this trivial incident, the *Brother Jonathan* passed by or stopped at Astoria, where the barque *Cambridge* was in harbor.

Continuing toward the open sea, the *Brother Jonathan* crossed the Columbia River bar at 1:30 the following morning, and headed northward along the coast of Washington Territory to Vancouver Island, arriving at Victoria at 10:00 on the morning of the 16th. The crew went ashore, the vessel was reprovisioned, and cargo was off-loaded.

At 1:00 in the early afternoon of the 17th, the lines of the *Brother Jonathan* were loosened from the dock, and she headed south toward her home port of San Francisco, arriving in mid-afternoon three days later. The *Alta California* subsequently listed 70 incoming passengers by name, noting that there were also "188 others."[3]

Incoming freight included 720 bales of wool, 262 hides, 15 bundles of skins, 145 sacks of beans, 2 bundles of furs, one horse (kept in an area of pens and stalls in the hold), 16 packages of butter, seven packages of eggs, 51 octaves of brandy, and 40 packages of merchandise.

Gold treasure arriving from the north included from Victoria, $193,000 for the account of Wells, Fargo & Co., and from Portland, $187,350 for Wells, Fargo; $31,151.57 for the bank of British Columbia; and $39,000 for the Bank of California, total declared value aboard ship, $450,501.47.

Meanwhile in San Francisco

Meanwhile, as the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was at sea, the *S.S. Sierra Nevada* was set to depart on the same route. Owned by the competing California & Oregon Steamship Line, Ben. Holladay, proprietor, the *Sierra Nevada* advertised that she would leave the Folsom Street Wharf on Tuesday, July 18, at 4:00 p.m., for Portland and Victoria.[4] The two ships alternated schedules so as to maximize their business.

Coastwise trade was brisk at the time. Seeking to increase its profits, a competitor to the north, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, investigated the success of the steamers in and out of San Francisco. It was learned that on a particular trip the *Brother Jonathan* had revenues as much as $34,000.[5] In the same month, Gen. George Wright, soon to go to Fort Vancouver in Washington Territory to take command of the Department of the Columbia, expressed his opinion that if a new, large ship could be built for the Oregon line it would capture a generous amount of trade. Wright envisioned a steamship measuring 260 feet long with a 38-foot beam, berths in cabins to accommodate 150 passengers plus more space in steerage, and a cargo capacity of 800 tons. At the time there was a rivalry between the commercial interests in San Francisco and those in Portland and nearby areas of Washington Territory. It was often felt that profits that should remain in the Pacific Northwest went instead to financiers and stockholders in California.

The *S.S. Del Norte,* a small steamer in the coastwise service, was a minor factor in the northern route, regularly

[1] A notice had been telegraphed to the *Alta California* and was published on the 14th, to the effect that the ship's departure time from Portland had been changed to 6:00 p.m. Apparently, further delays had occurred.

[2] Among the passengers aboard the *Brother Jonathan* during this encounter with the *Jane A. Falkenburg* was Norman Smith, young son of Victor Smith, who was traveling with his three siblings and mother. He later recalled (in "Victory"; see Bibliography): "We were run into by a lumber laden schooner that poked a hole into our port bow well down toward our water line. The captain concluded that temporary repairs would do until the vessel returned to San Francisco." • Concerning the *Jane A. Falkenburg* (*Falkinberg* in some accounts, *Falkenberg* in some others). She was built as a clipper bark (a.k.a. half clipper) at New Bedford, MA, in 1854. Departing Boston on September 6, 1854, Captain Charles A. Falkenburg at the helm, she made the run to the West Coast in 118 days, arriving at San Francisco on January 2, 1855. • Captain Falkenburg was killed in San Francisco in a carriage accident in February 1856, after which the ship was purchased by Capt. George Flavel of Astoria, WA. In the following December, widow Jane married Captain Falkenburg's friend and partner, Captain Thomas W. Badger (who in September 1857 was a passenger aboard the ill-fated S.S. *Central America*, and survived the tragedy, as did Jane). In 1861 Flavel took the ship on a "fantastic run of 3½ days from Astoria to San Francisco." In November 1899 the ship, by that time literally worn out, sank off the Mendocino (CA) coast with a load of lumber on a voyage from Port Hadlock to San Francisco. (Sources include William Armstrong [illegible] *Sail*, Vol. VI, 1897; Normand E. Klare, *The Final Voyage of the Central America 1857*, 1992 [this being an especially rich source]; and Don Marshall, *Oregon Shipwrecks*, 1984.)

[3] *Alta California*, July 21, 1865.

[4] Various notices including *Alta California*, July 12, 1865. Holladay was an important factor in coastwise transportation and operated the California & Oregon Steamship Line to the north and the Mexican Steamship Line to the south, among other interests.

[5] Dorothy O. Johansen and Frank B. Gill, "History of Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, 1937; letter of Simeon G. Reed (vice president of the O.S.N.) to J.W. Ladd (a director of O.S.N.), July 25, 1865, discussing business prospects. This article also mentioned the Colfax visit to Oregon. The *Oregonian*, July [illegible], 1865, carried news of the shipbuilding proposal.

San Francisco Bay as photographed in 1863. The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* is at anchor offshore in the distance to the right. Below an enlarged view from the photograph is shown. (San Francisco Maritime Museum)

Advertisement for the California, Oregon, and Mexican Steamship Co., which operated several vessels on the route north from San Francisco, including the large *S.S. Sierra Nevada* and the small *S.S. Del Norte,* the latter calling at Crescent City every two weeks. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

departing San Francisco and going to California coastal towns including Eureka, Trinidad, and Crescent City, laying over at each stop for about 12 to 22 hours, depending upon what was to be loaded and unloaded. On July 27, 1865, the *Del Norte* arrived in San Francisco, bringing nearly 60 passengers and a cargo of oats, eggs, butter, wool, and hides.[1]

Not everyone desired to go north by sea to reach the developing mining areas of inland Oregon and Idaho. San Franciscans who did not want to take either the *Brother Jonathan* or the *Sierra Nevada* to Portland, and then to connect with other boats and conveyances to go to the interior mines, might choose the overland route via the Chico and Idaho Stage Line, which operated each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.[2] This run was advertised to be "the nearest and best route connecting California and Idaho, being less than one-third the distance by way of Oregon." The traveler first took a river steamer from San Francisco to Sacramento, then boarded a stagecoach (fare: $11) from Sacramento to Chico, then paid $50 for a ride on the Chico and Idaho Stage Line to Ruby in the latter state. Meals were a separate expense and were taken at various stops along the route.

While most newspaper accounts concerning the *Brother Jonathan* told of her comings and goings, one notice told of legal actions. Tuesday, July 25, 1865, two suits were filed in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco: T.J. Reddich, special administrator of the estate of William Griffin, deceased, vs. Steamship *Brother Jonathan;* and Charles Mayo vs. Steamship *Brother Jonathan.* No details of the complaints were given in the press.[3]

Crescent City

On the rugged northern coast of California not far from the Oregon border, the small settlement of Crescent City furnished a stop for steamships. There was always business to be transacted and a cargo to be unloaded or put aboard to supply local residents as well as several inland mining camps. By 1865, when the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* last called there, the settlement was barely 15 years old.

On March 23, 1850, the schooner *Paragon* was stranded in Crescent Bay, prompting some to call the nearby water Paragon Bay for a time thereafter.[4] However, the designation proved to be short-lived. In the same year, disappointing returns in the gold mining settlement of Klamath City to the south brought prospectors to Crescent Bay, where some settled.[5] The name Crescent City for the small town was forwarded as early as May 2 of the same year in a notice in the *Pacific News* published in San Francisco, this being adapted from the adjacent bay of the same designation and outline.

Two entrepreneurs—R. Humphreys and J.F. Wendell—saw a bright future and secured land in the area in 1852. In February 1853 Wendell platted the town of Crescent City,

[1] *Alta California,* July 28, 1865.

[2] *San Francisco Chronicle,* July 25, 1865

[3] *Alta California,* July 26, 1865.

[4] Cited several places including Don B. Marshall, *California Shipwrecks,* p. 163.

[5] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California,* Vol. VI 1848-1859, p. 504. Additional information is from Anthony J. Bledsoe, *History of Del Norte County, California, with a Business and Traveler's Guide,* 1881. Gudde, Erwin G. *California Place Names. The Origin and Etymology of Current Geographical Names,* p. 75. Baldwin, Thomas, and J. Thomas, M.D., *A New and Complete Gazetteer of the United States,* p. 291. Fisher, Richard Swainson, M.D. *A New and Complete Statistical Gazetteer of the United States of America,* p. 159. By 1960 the word *Crescent* was used as part of about 20 geographical names in the state. In the 1850s there were [illegible] towns with *Crescent* in their names (best known of which in the early 1850s was Crescent City in Tuolumne County on the Tuolumne River 16 to 20 miles north of that river's entrance into the San Joaquin River). [illegible] as of 1960 only Crescent Mills (in Plumas County, a post office since 1870) and Crescent City. The 1860 federal census disclosed that in all of Del Norte County there were but 476 families and 1,993 people. Industries listed included two companies processing meal and flour, with a capital investment of $30,000 and employing 12 hands; and four companies in the [illegible] lumber trade, hiring eight employees and with an investment of $6,000; the latter must have been very small operations.

An early Spanish sailing vessel off the northern coast of California with rocks looming ahead. In the early seventeenth century Spanish explorer Sebastian Viscaino explored the rockbound coast in the area that became known as St. George's Reef near Crescent City. (*Annals of San Francisco*)

laying out streets and dividing the land into parcels for sale. In the same year Crescent City was first listed in the Coast Survey charts. Also in the same year a mill was erected in the settlement, providing employment.

On April 13, 1854, the settlement was incorporated as a city by a special act of the State Legislature. In that year the community had 200 houses and some 800 inhabitants, according to one account,[1] and even published its own newspaper. It was a rather quiet place with little in the way of entertainment or social amenities. Local Native Americans, variously called the Klamath or the Digger Indians, were a threat to the settlers, and the settlers were no less a threat to those who had lived there first. Thus, there was tension between the two cultures for a long time, punctuated by occasional unfortunate incidents.

In the late 1850s and in the 1860s some placer miners using hydraulic methods met with limited success extracting gold in the region, but not enough metal was found to cause any excitement. Crescent City offered saloons, fraternal lodges, and other places of entertainment for miners and others.

By 1860, the first year it appeared in the national decennial census, the town consisted of a string of wooden buildings mostly arranged along the bay and was the leading community in a county of 1,993 souls. In later years the placer diggings in the region petered out, and the population of the town declined. Prospectors departed, and laborers sought more favorable opportunities.

In 1857 proposals were tendered to name the county in which Crescent City was situated, and suggestions included Alta ("high," relating to its position on the California coast), Altissima ("very high"), Rincon ("point" or "corner"), and Del Merritt (a curious suggestion), among others.[2] A favorite for some was Buchanan in recognition of President-elect James Buchanan. However, Del Norte County was decided upon, translating to "of the north."

In its issue of March 15, 1857, *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, published in Boston, printed an engraving showing Crescent City. The weekly illustrated newspaper was one of the most popular in America, and featured many stories and engravings describing far-off places, including occasional accounts about California. This text accompanied the picture:

> The pleasing landscape...was drawn for us by Mr. Hill, from an accurate sketch made on the spot by John R. Mc Comb, Jr., Esq., of Crescent City, and kindly placed at our disposal.
>
> The city occupies the curving shore of a bay, whence it derives its name, and is in latitude 41° 44' north and 124° 10' west longitude. It is on the northern coast of California, about 20 miles south of the Oregon boundary.
>
> The town is built on a sandy level beach, and is over half a mile long and directly facing the ocean. It contains a population of over 700 resident inhabitants, besides a large number of transient packers and traders who make this their rendezvous for obtaining their supplies of goods for the interior mining towns. From here may daily be seen large numbers of pack mules leaving with their loads for Sailor Diggins, Alt House, Orleans Bar, Happy Camp, Indian Creek, Deer Creek, Jacksonville, and Yreka.
>
> The town is about three years old and is situated in the heart of the mining districts, some of which are but a mile distant. It is admirably situated, and is the only safe harbor for vessels north of San Francisco and south of the Columbia River, easy of access and dangerous only for a few months in winter. Propositions are now being made to build a breakwater for a few hundred yards on the south, and when work is finished, it will be commodious and safe at all weathers. The United States government has lately erected a fine lighthouse on an island in the bay.
>
> The town contains a large number of brick buildings, stores, etc., also a Presbyterian church, a Masonic and an Odd Fellows hall, hotels, saloons, express, and a newspaper office. The steamships *Columbia* and *Goliah* run to and from this port to Oregon and San Francisco, making five trips a month. Back of this town is a dense forest of spruce and fir trees, only passable by the trails, and here abound deer, elk, bear, and other noble game, while at a distance of four miles further back is a large lake or lagoon, where the sportsman can at all times find ample amusement with water fowl, and of endless variety.

Disasters Near Crescent City

The combination of treacherous, changing currents, a tide that could vary up to eight or nine feet from high to low, and uncharted rocks and reefs took its toll, and at least a half dozen craft were wrecked in the Crescent City area during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The *America*, a steamship of 923 tons,[3] had been built in New York in 1853 by William Brown, and had come to

[1] Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VI. 1848-1859, p. 505.

[2] Gudde, Erwin G. *California Place Names: The Origin and Etymology of Current Geographical Names*, p. 82.

[3] Another account says 934 tons, while another calls her a propeller (not paddle wheel) steamer; another account gives the disaster date as 1885. Erik Heyl did not study the *S.S. America* in any of his three volumes, and little has been recorded about her in modern studies, Wiltsee being an exception.

Crescent City as it appeared in an 1857 engraving. An account related that many commercial buildings were made of brick, and that the structures stretched for a half mile along the beach. (*Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, March 15, 1857)

San Francisco in 1854 to enter the coastwise service, first to San Diego and later to Crescent City during the time that there was much gold-mining activity inland from the community, sometimes serving Portland as well. Her owner was John T. Wright (who later, in November 1857, would become an owner of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*). On June 27, 1855, the *Crescent City Herald* included this account of a disaster that had occurred on the 24th:[1]

BURNING OF THE STEAMER *AMERICA*

This splendid steamer sailed into our Bay and came to anchor about 3:20 o'clock on Sunday afternoon. The weather was fine, the sea calm, and everything indicated a brief visit, and a speedy resumption of the trip to Puget Sound, to which port she was steering with a company of United States Infantry, numbering 132 men, under the command of Major Prince.

After the mail and express matter had come ashore, an unusual quantity of smoke issued from the vessel, and conjecture was busy for a few minutes respecting the cause. But conjecture was soon solidified into certainty. The vessel was on fire and a scene of excitement both on shore and at sea, followed which we have feeble powers of painting.

Lighters, boats and canoes surrounded the fatal vessel and dotted the Bay; we could see from the shore that those on board were making almost superhuman exertions to master the threatened calamity. All the soldiers who could be spared from the vessel were sent ashore, and in about half an hour after the first smoke was perceived, we could see the paddle wheels beginning to move and this fine ship was run aground in shallow water, about one hundred or one hundred and fifty yards from the shore. Buckets, ladders, ropes and everything deemed useful were sent on board with a rapidity and energy truly surprising, and to which no pen can do justice. At times we believed that the fiery element must yield to such a mass of gigantic and united exertion; but no, the dense smoke gradually deepened and darkened, the efforts on board became feebler on account of the impossibility of maintaining their perilous positions, and a sheet of clear flame that tore through the black smoke, proclaimed the triumph of the destroyer. Human power was vanquished, the vessel from stem to stern was soon a mass of flame whose brightness was painful to the eye. She was left to her fate. The greedy flames fed eagerly, and on Monday morning a charred, smoldering and hideous skeleton was all that remained of the so lately compact, swift and seaworthy steamer...

We refer our readers to the following documents which we have just received from Captain Wright, the proprietor of the lost vessel. In addition to what is there stated, he told us there was not a dollar of insurance on the vessel and estimated his loss at $140,000.00. The *America* was built in New York in 1853, and registered 923 tons. She arrived in San Francisco in 1854, since which time she has been employed in the Coast trade, the principal portion of the time running to Crescent City, and the balance to San Diego.

The cargo of the *S.S. America* was saved and the hull and machinery were salvaged.

In 1859 the town once again was the focal point for a disaster.[2] The trim little schooner *Exact*, seaworthy but nearing her 30th birthday, docked in Crescent City. The ship had been built in Glastonbury, Connecticut, in 1830, had seen service out of Nantucket in the 1840s, later sailing to San Francisco in the early days of the Gold Rush. In the best tradition of the time, her crew deserted and headed for the Sierras. The owners were lucky and the 73-foot, 73-ton ship eventually was remanned, and for a long time engaged in successful coastwise trade carrying lumber, merchandise, and supplies. On November 13, 1851, she en-

[1] As quoted by Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*, pp. 163-165. This item also appeared in the *Alta California*, June [illegible].
[2] Information adapted from Jim Gibbs, *Disaster Log of Ships: A Pictorial Account of Shipwrecks, California to Alaska*, 1971, pp. [illegible].

tered the history books, at least local ones, when she brought the first load of passengers across Puget Sound in Washington Territory to found the city of Seattle.

In 1859 she was in Crescent City, where she took aboard 300 barrels of salmon and 10 tons of potatoes. Exiting the harbor on March 20, she ran into a fierce gale from the southwest. Afraid of having the small ship dashed upon the rocks, Captain James J. Higgins lowered two anchors and determined to ride it out. The waves rose to impressive heights, and before long the anchor chains broke. The captain ordered the sails to be set for an escape run, but they were soon ripped to shreds. Meanwhile cascades of water flooded the hold. Distress flares were fired, and that night a group of Crescent City folks prepared a wooden boat to investigate and help, but rescuers were unable to reach the stricken ship. The next morning the beached schooner was found, and every man in the crew was brought to safety, just a few hours before the *Exact* turned over and was smashed to smithereens on the rocks. A crowd of onlookers on the beach cheered the lucky crew and the rescuers as they returned to town.[1]

J. Ross Browne in Crescent City

In December 1860, world traveler, government employee, raconteur, and, author J. Ross Browne, who as an Indian agent was visiting local Klamath native settlements, was "stranded" in Crescent City. It will be recalled that in 1855 Browne had spent some time at the San Francisco Mint studying its operations and filing a report to the Treasury Department.

By 1860, and perhaps even before, Browne had developed into a curmudgeon. Thus, in 1860, when not all went as planned during his stay in Crescent City, it quickly developed into a personal disaster, at least by his accounting.[2] He had arrived aboard the S.S. *Pacific* and had intended to stay but a day or two, but his return passage was delayed.

Browne enjoyed life in large cities, particularly in and near San Francisco. In contrast, Washington, D.C., home of the government officials to whom he reported and where he and his family once lived, was despised by him. However, most of his vitriol was reserved for small towns and settlements, especially if the inhabitants lacked the refinement that Browne himself claimed to possess.

In 1858 he ignited what his biographer called "the great Port Townsend controversy" when he filed a report describing that Washington Territory town as a scene of drunkenness and dissipation. So incensed were inhabitants of that region—most of whom were normal, hard-working folks—that the matter was still being discussed and raised tempers two years later.

Browne's letters to his wife Lucy from Crescent City included the following comments. These were private thoughts to be shared with his family and were not intended for print:

> Crescent City, December 20, 1859.
>
> After a dreary sojourn of two days at the Klamath reservation, where it rained nearly all the time, as it generally does, we started for this charming city on Friday.... The country around Crescent City is well wooded and watered—that is to say; all of it that does not consist of wood does consist of water. Sunday passed in expectations of the down [to San Francisco] steamer. No steamer yet. What in the world has become of it? I had some idea it would be my fate to spend a fateful Christmas, but to spend it in Crescent City—heaven help me, what is to be done!
>
> There is no outlet from this wretched hole, except to the sea on one side, into thick forests, swamps, jungles, and snowy mountains on every other. What in the world can induce people to settle in such countries? I do believe I would as soon live in Washington City as here,[3] and I don't know any greater punishment than that would be. Of course all places are objectionable to me. I don't believe the most delightful spot upon earth was ever intended for a man to inhabit more than six months. A day in Crescent City, however, ought to count a month, and I have been here already about six. I shall write more in desperation if the steamer does not come in this evening.

[1] Concerning other nautical disasters in the Crescent City area, Don B. Marshall, *California Shipwrecks*, cites the following, listed alphabetically (not including those already mentioned in the text), *American Eagle* (wrecked in 1941); schooner *David and Nettie* (wrecked in December 1880); *Del Norte Woodsman* (wrecked in 1955; later salvaged); *Elvenia* (went on shore at Crescent City; May 1889; two people died); *Garrison* (wrecked five miles south of Crescent City, February 3, 1948; the 59-ton oil-fired propeller ship had been built in 1945); *Helen Kimball* (wrecked in 1882 near Crescent City); schooner *J W. Wall* (went ashore at Crescent City after her moorings parted); schooner *Lizzie Madison* (wrecked December 8, 1885); schooner *May Queen* (went ashore and was totally wrecked after she broke from her mooring, November 12, 1879); steamer *Point Loma* (this venerable 360-foot ship of 4,288 tons, built in 1888, foundered on a reef in heavy fog, July 18, 1950, and sunk in three minutes with a $500,000 load of lumber aboard); steamer *Queen Christina* (360-foot steel ship built in Newcastle, Scotland, in 1901; stranded and broke up on St. George's Reef, December 21, 1907); schooner *Restless* (wrecked June 23, 1886); schooner *San Buenaventura* (abandoned at Northwest Seal Rocks near Crescent City, January 14, 1910; drifted north to offshore rocks near Gold Beach, OR); petroleum powered 122-ton schooner *Shark* (built in 1911, foundered in the Crescent City harbor, October 9, 1924); schooner *Sophie Wenger* (beached at Crescent City, November 24, 1875); steam-powered 953 ton propeller freighter (built in 1911, earlier known as the *Willamette*, foundered at Point St. George, November 15, 1942); steam-powered 301-ton propeller *South Coast* (built in 1887; left Crescent City on June 16, 1930, with 19 men and 100,000 board feet of lumber aboard; lost at sea with no survivors; wreckage was sighted months later on November 22 off Port Reyes, CA); and *Wing and Wing* (wrecked with her cargo when she struck the shore in May 1889; she was under tow from Trinidad).

[2] Information from *J. Ross Browne, His Letters, Journal & Writings*, edited by Lina Fergusson Browne, 1969, pp. 201 ff. Browne was also a contributor to *Harper's Monthly*, and beginning in 1860 *Harper's* published his serial account of service on the West Coast as an Indian agent; however, there is no specific mention of Crescent City in those narratives that is relevant to the present text.

[3] As an Indian agent for the government, Browne filed many reports with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and his family lived there for a time. Many of Browne's writings, both published during his lifetime (such as his magazine articles for *Harper's Monthly* and other journals) and later (the personal correspondence here quoted) are written with an air of negativism, but always with tongue-in-cheek, in the vein of his contemporary, Charles Browne ("Artemus Ward"), and Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain," who appeared on the scene a few years later), but lacking the dialect and *obvious* satire of Clemens and the *other* Browne. Clemens and both Brownes were in San Francisco from time to time in the early 1860s.

•

Crescent City, December 21, 1859.

I took a long walk this afternoon by the seashore and had a great many thoughts to keep me company....

•

Crescent City, December 23, 1859.

At the present writing I am perfectly useless to society. Public spirit or private enterprise, I have none. The sea is so vast and broad here, the surf rolls in with such a grand rebound over the craggy shore; the white seagulls soar aloft over the cliffs with such graceful freedom; and all nature has such a comprehensive aspect—stretching so far away from the petty vexations of life, that there is nothing left in me of envy, jealousy, malice or hatred; nothing but love for the good, true and pure.

•

Crescent City, December 24, 1859.

Today such a tremendous gale is blowing from the southeast. No steamer can come in with such a gale blowing. What I dreaded is coming to pass. Tomorrow will be Christmas. Had I been asked to select the most dreary place in the world to spend a Christmas day in, I think I would have named Crescent City.

It is not altogether unprofitable to be imprisoned for a week or two in a miserable place like this one. One has such a pleasant sense of martyrdom. I did not like the idea of going to Mendocino when I started; but duty required it.[1] Now, by a visitation of Providence, I am shut up here, and likely to be for another week; all on account of doing my duty. Old John Rogers who suffered at the stake sang hymns and was happy in the midst of flames. Why shouldn't a man be happy when staked in Crescent City with a consciousness that posterity will do justice to his sufferings....

"Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness!" The poet who indulged in this extravagant sentiment can, I am sure, be accommodated with lodgings in Crescent City at the rate of $2 per day.

Then followed this letter posted from Crescent City to an acquaintance, Jim Roche:

Crescent City, December 27, 1859.

...It is enough to make a man sharp to be cruising around for two or three years among Digger Indians, and then be shut up for 10 consecutive days in Crescent City. The attrition of such society naturally puts an edge on one's wits. Another week in this God-forsaken placed will make me a perfect razor.

Yesterday [*sic*] was a glorious Christmas. A boy in the neighborhood of my hotel (a frame shanty) got off two firecrackers, and a man downtown got drunk and had a fight with an awning post. A family of naked savages on the beach dined sumptuously on the entrails of a whale, and three of the small Diggers partook of a private repast on the remains of a crow. For my part, I enjoyed the luxury of clam soup, fried chicken, bread, and coffee. Vague rumors of egg-nog and apple toddy reached me, but I saw nothing of them....

Then followed this letter to wife Lucy:

San Francisco, December 30, 1859.

At last the *Columbia* came along and picked up the unfortunate castaways at Crescent City. We arrived here last night. I was rewarded for all my grievances by finding two letters from you on my desk, dated the 18th and 24th Nov....

John S. Hittell, who wrote of the resources of California in the mid-1860s, commented that redwood forests predominated in Del Norte County,

> but the timber is dense almost beyond example, and could not be cleared profitably, because all the redwood stumps throw out sprouts which grow up to trees. Much of the prairie land is fertile and suitable for cultivation, but is remote from the market.[2]

By 1880 the population of Crescent City had risen back to the level of 1854, and once again 800 people lived there, as part of Del Norte County's total of 2,584.[3]

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[1] Mendocino, down the coast toward San Francisco, offered a landing spot for steamers and was the access point for Browne's visit to Indians in that area.

[2] John S. Hittell, *The Resources of California*. 2nd edition. 1866, pp 153-154.

[3] Population figures for the area seem to be quite inaccurate, or at best are approximations, and it seems that in various citations as well as federal censuses, no sharp delineation was made between those living specifically within Crescent City and those living in the general area.

Chapter Twelve

The Fateful Voyage

North from San Francisco

The most eventful voyage of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*—the one that was to be her last—commenced on Friday, July 28, 1865. On July 27 the *Alta California* published this advertisement:

FOR PORTLAND AND VICTORIA
The California Steam Navigation
Company's Steamship
Brother Jonathan,

S.J. DeWolf, Commander. Will leave Broadway Wharf, for the above ports, on Friday, July 28, 1865,

AT 10 O'CLOCK A.M.

Bills of lading will be furnished to shippers, and none others signed.

For freight or passage apply on board, or at the office of the California Steam Navigation Company on the northeast corner of Front and Jackson streets.

J. WHITNEY, Jr., President.

On the day of sailing, July 28, the *Alta California* carried this account of the impending trip:

BRIGADIER GENERAL WRIGHT'S DEPARTURE

Brigadier General Wright, who has been so long identified with the administration of the military affairs of the Department of the Pacific, and recently the General in command of the Department of California, leaves today on the steamer for Oregon, to assume the command of his old District, that of Columbia.

During Gen. Wright's lengthy official connection with people and interests of the Pacific Coast, he has won the esteem, confidence and respect of all true American citizens. During the trying times of the early days of the rebellion, General Wright's moderation and clear-sightedness carried him and our people peacefully through the surging billows of excitement and fanaticism. His most bitter enemy cannot impugn his honesty or patriotism, although some may differ as to the policy he carried out. A soldier beyond reproach, a courteous and genial gentleman, he leaves hosts of friends behind him, to be met by an equal host of friends in Oregon. General Wright is accompanied by his wife and staff, having arrived from Sacramento on Wednesday night. Last evening he was honored with a serenade at the Occidental Hotel.

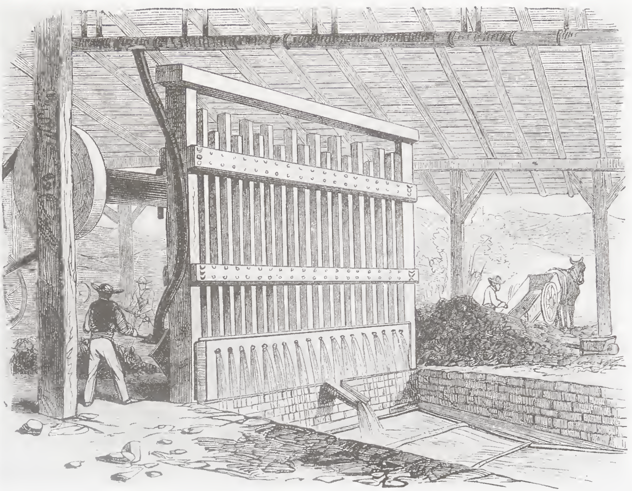
The same issue printed this related note:

QUICK TRIP: Our old friend, Jas. W. Jennings, familiarly known as the "Crazy Newsboy," arrived here last Tuesday, on the [Pacific Mail Steamship Company's] steamer *Constitution* for the East. He left The Dalles, Oregon, March 24th, and Portland on the 28th, and arrived in San Francisco April 1st. Left San Francisco the 3d of April, on the steamer *Golden Age.* He leaves us again today for good on the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, for Portland and The Dalles. He is as mercurial as ever, is much improved in health, and says he has dropped all his crazy tricks.

Loading the Ship

Loading of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* took place on Thursday, July 27, continuing in the evening and the next morning, under the command and eye of Captain S.J. DeWolf. The rigging and placing aboard of certain heavy equipment was an arduous task, especially for a giant iron quartz stamp mill for the crushing of gold ore and other equipment destined to be forwarded overland to the Owyhee District in Idaho. Other machinery was to be shipped to the partnerships of Goldsmith & Friendly, Ellsworth & Belshaw, and the Underwood firm in Springfield, Oregon. The equipment, estimated to weigh well over 100 tons, was placed between decks in the forward part of the steamer, in a large cargo area on the main deck that had been used for a passenger lounge before the ship's complete rebuilding.[1]

[1] The memoirs of Mrs. DeWolf, widow of the captain, stated that this area had been damaged earlier in the *Falkenburg* collision and had not been properly prepared; this statement is questionable (as quoted by DSR in *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*)



Quartz mill in operation near a gold mine. A similar device, weighing many tons, was shipped aboard the ***S.S. Brother Jonathan*** on July 28, 1865, headed for Portland, then to the Owyhee District of Idaho. The mill consisted of heavy iron bars mounted vertically, actuated by a camshaft. The bars in succession were raised high in the frame, then allowed to fall free onto rock in the base of the mill, pulverizing it into dust and small pieces. The residue was then carried away by water and processed by acid or mercury. (*Progress of the United States*)

Accompanying the quartz mill was B. Mathewson, representative of the Providence Mining Company.[1]

Machinery for a factory being built by the Ellendale Woolen Mills Company in Oregon, about 17 miles from the state capital, Salem, was a part of the cargo as well.[2] This equipment had been purchased from the Cleveland Company, Worcester, Massachusetts, through Senator James W. Nesmith, a stockholder in the mill. In the Senate Chamber of the Capitol in Washington, Nesmith was a leading advocate of The Dalles Mint, soon to be in the building stage.[3]

A fire engine and hose, valued at $1,500, was on its way to Portland, to be forwarded to Salem, Oregon, where, no doubt, it was eagerly awaited.[4] At the time, fire engines and equipment were the pride of many communities.

Crates filled with agricultural implements, hardware, rolls of copper sheathing, restaurant china plates, and other supplies were loaded aboard, as were commercial goods including dozens of cases of cigars, cases of dry goods (clothing and yardage), a shipment of playing cards, and even a billiard table, among many other items. Foodstuffs ample for the voyage were stocked by the ship's quartermaster. The distance between stops was anticipated only to be two to three days on the northern run, so there was no need to take live animals aboard to provide meat. Two heavy pumps added to the load, which in the aggregate was said to have totaled about 500 tons.[5]

James R. Richards was one of several freight forwarders and commission agents who was busy arranging merchan-

[1] Dorothy O. Johansen and Frank B. Gill, "History of Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, 1937, letter of Simeon G. Reed (vice president of the O.S.N.) to J.W. Ladd (a director of O.S.N.), August 3, 1865, discussing the loss of the ship. In part: "A Mr Matteson representing a 'Providence Co' was on board with 100 tons of quartz machinery for Owyhee."

[2] Alfred L. Lomax, *Pioneer Woolen Mills in Oregon* (Binfords & Mort, Portland, 1941), p. 252, as later quoted by Lomax in "Brother Jonathan, Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," p. 342. Also by the same author, "Ellendale Woolen Mill," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*.

[3] Nesmith had emigrated to Oregon in 1843. He was a prominent Democrat, later switching his allegiance to the new Republican party. In the 1860 presidential contest he worked for the election of Abraham Lincoln.

[4] Per an account in the *Oregonian*, August 15, 1865.

[5] Per the official government inquiry (quoted in Chapter 13).

dise to be shipped north. His firm, Richard & McCraken, advertised:[1]

> Richards & McCraken, forwarding and commission merchants; importers of salt, direct from Carmen Island and San Quentin; and jobbers in Oregon flour, grain, bacon, fruit, lard, &c., &c. Lime, cement and plaster. Received by every sailing vessel.
>
> Will attend to the purchase and shipment of merchandise of every description in the Eastern and San Francisco markets. Also, to forwarding goods in San Francisco and Portland. Will also attend to the sale of Oregon produce in Victoria—a well established house in that place, attending to our business there. James R. Richards, John McCraken. 405 Front street, corner of Clay, San Francisco; 16 North Front Street, Portland.[2]

On this trip at least one, possibly two fine steeds—the personal horses of Gen. Wright—were tied in a secluded area on the main deck normally used for stowage, these accommodations probably being in consideration of Wright's importance, as horses and other large animals were normally kept in stalls or pens in the hold. Wright's pet Newfoundland dog was also along for the trip, accommodations not stated, but probably in the general's stateroom.

Bins in the hold were filled with coal to fire the boilers, although—as was also the case for other steamers—wood could be used in an emergency. Cargo holds below deck were accessible through large panels in the main deck.

Stowed below were two camels in stalls normally reserved for horses. It is likely that these were the same two camels that had attracted much attention in San Francisco the preceding autumn when they had been exhibited by John Wilson in a show set up on Jackson Street. The show included the Lee Family riders, being the wife and children of H.C. Lee. The camels, certainly a curiosity on a West Coast steamship, were consigned to the same H.C. Lee, who had gone north and who planned to exhibit them in Oregon.[3] Also on its way to Lee was a trained show horse. Other livestock may have been aboard as well, but if so, there was no accounting of it.

Lee's wife and young child were among the passengers and had booked their passage to Portland, while H.C. Lee himself planned to be on had to greet them upon their arrival. The Lee family of acrobats and troupers was well known to many San Franciscans, and they had played there intermittently since 1851. Their advertisements and playbills had appeared in local papers for a long time. From October 23 to November 26, 1863, the Mammoth Circus & Roman Hippodrome, John Wilson and H.C. Lee, proprietors, and J.A. Alexander, agent, appeared under canvas in a lot on Jackson Street, San Francisco. Featured were:

> A company of 46 ladies and gentlemen including the following:
>
> Sig. Sebastian, equestrian (farewell appearance).
>
> Young Romeo Sebastian, equestrian (farewell appearance).
>
> Orrin Family, acrobats.
>
> Lee Children, riders and acrobats.
>
> Geo. Ryland, juggler and cannonball thrower.
>
> Wm. Worrell, jester.
>
> Wm. Aymar, jester.
>
> Mons. Conona.

More recently, at the Mechanics Pavilion the slightly renamed Grand Roman Hippodrome & Mammoth Circus entertained the public from December 26, 1864, to February 12, 1865, and included in the bill were Lee & Ryland, acrobats and tumblers. No doubt, Mrs. Lee and her youngster had these and other memories in their minds as they boarded the *Brother Jonathan*. Other children on the same voyage probably looked forward to being able to go below deck and look at the camels through the slats of their stalls. Although the ship had two primary levels of travel quality—first class and steerage—passengers buying tickets for the latter accommodations were free to walk around the ship and deck areas and to use the upper deck lounge.

The Published Cargo

As an aid to commerce and as an indicator of current trade the *Alta California* and other newspapers routinely printed synopses of ships' cargoes, usually stated in general terms and omitting many items. Such listings consisted solely of commercial freight and did not include personal effects or, in most instances of shipments to the *north* during this era, accounts of *outgoing* coin shipments or valuable objects (although *incoming* treasure was often stated).

On July 29, 1865, the *Brother Jonathan* having left port on its journey north, this listing, omitting many items, was printed for the record in the *Alta California*:

EXPORTS FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO VICTORIA

Per steamer *Brother Jonathan*—July 28:

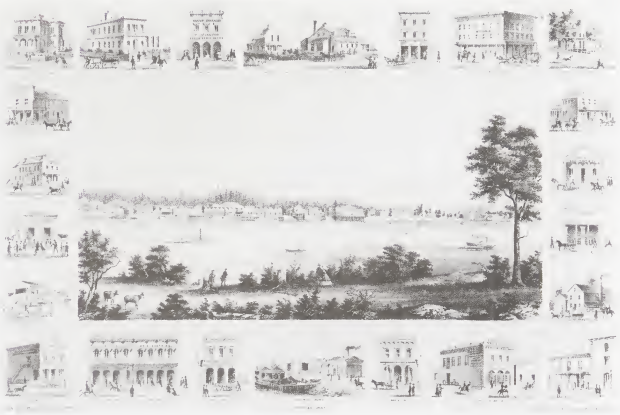
> Acid [carboy]: 1
>
> Hardware [crates or cases of]: 4
>
> Agricultural Implements [crates]: 5
>
> Hops bales: 2
>
> Axle grease [container]: 1
>
> Merchandise in Chinese packages:[4]

[1] *The Portland Directory for the Year Commencing* [illegible]

[2] The Portland depot was housed in a two-story brick [illegible], and was illustrated as a border vignette in the circa 1861 map, [illegible], published by Britton & Co., San Francisco.

[3] Information concerning H.C. Lee is primarily from the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI, which furnished a large file on the subject. Relative to camels, these animals had been seen [illegible] in San Francisco [illegible] July 1860 when 15 Bactrian (double-humped) camels [illegible] on the schooner *Mary E. Foote*, imported by Otto [illegible], who had the idea that they might be useful in hauling goods [illegible] areas, the project never saw fruition. [illegible] the U.S. government had imported Arabian (single-hump) camels from [illegible] to use them in military service, but this was not [illegible]. In 1861 Camels were in limited service [illegible] Walker Lake, Virginia City, [illegible] *The Saga of Wells Fargo*, p. [illegible] man in that account, as by [illegible] information about Lee is in Appendix III.

[4] No doubt imported from China into San Francisco and [illegible] shipped to Victoria.



Portland as shown in a circa 1861 view. The building of Richards & McCraken is shown at the lower left corner. (Lithograph by Britton, San Francisco; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art specimen as reproduced by John W. Reps, *Panoramas of Promise*)

Billiard table: 1
Metal sheathing [crates]: 8
Boots and shoes [cases]: 9
Bird cages: 4
Cards, playing [cases]: 2
[illegible] [cases]: 10
[illegible]: 25
Clothing [cases]: 8
[illegible]: 1
Drugs [case]: 1
[illegible]: 2
Dry goods [cases]: 6
Tobacco [cases]: 17
Dry goods, bales: 2
•
Value: $12,839.40

As can be seen, no specific mention was made of the ore crushing mill or woolen mill machinery. Nor were the camels, horses, etc., listed. A later account published in Portland on August [illegible], 1865 stated that there was so much *flour* aboard that the commodities market was affected, and yet flour is not listed in the manifest printed in the newspaper. In 1916 a newspaper account of the ship's cargo included copper, steel railroad rails, and [illegible] barrels of whiskey.[1]

In fact, if the cargo amounted to 500 tons, and if the machinery accounted for about 100 tons of that total, it is obvious that the list published in July 1865 fell far short of accounting for the remaining 400 tons. Further, the value was just a fraction of what was really aboard. A later account stated that insurance on the cargo amounted to $48,490, and that "probably two-thirds of the cargo was uninsured" (these figures are for commercial cargo, not coins, as the latter were nearly always self-insured due to the 5% premium rate in effect for shipment on the route).

Fictional Accounts

In a bit of revisionist history, it was claimed by Mrs. DeWolf in 1892 that her husband vigorously protested that far too much weight was aboard, the *Brother Jonathan* was riding too low in the water, and that this was a situation fraught with danger. In effect, here was an accident waiting to happen. In no uncertain terms, according to her account, the captain was informed that if he did not want to command the vessel, there were many other experienced helmsmen who would be glad to get the work. Further:[2]

> The *Brother Jonathan* had been in a collision with a barkentine, *Jane A. Falkenburg*, [which was] sailing up the Columbia River only a few weeks [earlier].... When the *Brother Jonathan* came to port in San Francisco, the ship was not

[1] *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1916 (quoted at length in Chapter 14).
[2] Marie DeWolf's reminiscences written in Fulton, Sonoma County, CA, on May 25, 1892, later extensively quoted, including by Celestine K. Wiggins in "The Katherine Tidlund Story."

properly repaired and not ready to embark on a journey in the event of high seas.[1]

Consequently, the night before they were to leave, the officers and many of the crew met the captain in the saloon to canvass the situation and decide whether to all leave in a body or take the chances of going to the bottom. It was found upon investigation but two of the officers had a dollar until pay day and all had families. To go ashore would be fatal because of the fact that at that time the navigation company owned nearly every steamer in and out of that port, and to incur its displeasure would be suicidal as it shut off all hopes for employment in the future.

Most of them had been in the company's employ from 10 to 15 years and many of them incapacitated for other employment. They finally decided to go on board, but to keep all these deliberations a profound secret....

Similarly, a lightly researched text, *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest,* printed in 1895 stated this:[2]

For months preceding her departure on the last trip the northern business had been exceedingly heavy, and the steamers were obliged to leave freight behind for lack of carrying capacity. This state of affairs existed when the *Brother Jonathan* was preparing for her fatal voyage, and on July 27, the day she was scheduled to sail, her master, DeWolf, endeavored to induce the agent to stop receiving cargo, warning him that she was already as deeply laden as she could run with safety, even without the large number of passengers expected.

The official who was acting in place of Major Samuel Hensley, the regular agent and vice president of the company, paid no attention to his remonstrances, and intimated that, if the captain did not wish to take the steamer out, he could find a man who would. DeWolf said no more at the time, though he expressed his misgivings to a friend on the dock a few minutes before sailing.

Mrs. DeWolf's commentary seems to be largely fictional, as does that in the Lewis & Dryden account which seems to have been built solely upon her story.

In fact, just the *opposite* situation was true! No such overloading took place. The ship was very lightly burdened on this trip. As a point of information, the load of about 500 tons of freight was some 400 tons less than her 900-ton capacity. Moreover, the ship carried a relatively light passenger load. In reading dozens of articles and thousands of words of text, writer has located no *contemporary* account of dangerously overloading the ship, or even coming close to it, although Third Officer James Patterson (subsequently quoted) stated that it was loaded heavily in the forward part of the vessel, this referring to the placement of the mining machinery, not to the overall cargo weight of the vessel. Similarly, an official government inquiry found no overloading either of passengers or freight.

Golden (and Paper) Cargo

With regard to shipments of golden treasure from San Francisco south to Panama and Nicaragua, some of the larger banking houses and express companies published dollar amounts in local newspapers, as they felt it advertised their strength and reputation. A decade earlier in 1855, a well-known San Francisco bank was questioned because an outgoing shipment of gold treasure was to have been sent to Central America for transfer to New York, but apparently was not, raising concern about the bank's stability. All was settled when the steamship line stated that it had forgotten to mention the shipment in newspaper publicity concerning the vessel's departure! Gold sent to the south to Panama or Nicaragua was usually destined for the Philadelphia Mint, the New York City Assay Office, or for various firms and agencies in the same metropolis, often for transshipment to London. Such exports were a mixture of gold coins from the San Francisco Mint and large ingots from private assayers.

On the route north from San Francisco to Portland, such as plied in the summer of 1865 by the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and the *S.S. Sierra Nevada,* it was common practice to ship large amounts of gold coins, usually in the form of $20 double eagles, but not ingots, although there may have been exceptions. Outbound money shipments to the north were rarely publicized.

During the 24 hours prior to the departure of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in late July 1865, the ship's purser, John S. Benton, received and signed receipts for various sealed packages of coins, currency, and valuables entrusted to his care during the northward voyage. Such packages were not examined, but were simply logged in, receipted, and stored. It was often the situation in the steamer trade that specific details concerning large amounts of bullion, coins, and other financial instruments were not disclosed, in the interest of safekeeping and security. Typically, various banks and counting houses would transmit such items on behalf of clients. Put simply, it was no one's business except the sender.

As purser, Benton is said to have been custodian for a private transfer shipment of $65,000 in gold coins addressed to the Bank of Dexter-Horton Co. in Seattle, and a shipment of gold coins amounting to $76,000 for the Northwest Fur Traders Association in the town of Portland.[3]

The purser was no stranger to ocean travel, having been on ships' crews since his early boyhood, first with sailing vessels, then on steamers, rising to the position of first officer.[4] Coming to the West, he signed on in the 1850s with

[1] The reference is to the minor collision the *Brother Jonathan* had the preceding July 14 with the *Jane A. Falkenburg* on the Columbia River near Portland. The *Brother Jonathan* had no structural damage at all, while the other vessel suffered a broken bowsprit, which was easily repaired, and went on to serve for many years at sea.

[2] Page 132. This text seems to have been very lightly researched as it includes several other inaccuracies regarding the *Brother Jonathan*, including a wrong launching date, wrong location of her first launch, etc. Unfortunately, for anyone seeking reliable information about the ship, many later accounts have repeated the Lewis & Dryden commentary, often with embellishments limited only by the writer's imagination.

[3] DSR, S.S. *Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered!*

[4] Biographical note—"by a gentleman personally acquainted with most of the officers and crew," *Alta California*, August [illegible], 1865.

the California Steam Navigation Company as a purser on the river steamers that plied the river on the San Francisco to Stockton route. Later, he was employed by Major S.J. Hensley, of San Francisco, as purser aboard the *S.S. Senator*, which position he maintained until being transferred to duty on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. Coincidentally, Major Hensley's nephew, 40-year-old John P. Hensley, was also on the crew of the *Brother Jonathan*, in the capacity of storekeeper.

To accommodate valuables, including the ship's own financial reserves and passenger jewelry and money aggregating a further $80,000, a large Doblier safe was used. Made of laminated steel with walls nearly three inches thick, the unit, with heavy steel double doors, weighed several tons, stood about six feet high and measured about three feet wide and equally deep.[1] Most probably, the safe was stored either in the purser's cabin immediately aft of the paddlewheel shaft on the main deck, or in a strongroom in the hold below the purser's quarters.[2]

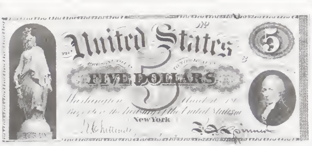
Passenger William Logan, the superintendent of the mint-to-be at The Dalles, was also a government Indian agent for the Warm Springs tribe and others in Oregon. Prior to departing from San Francisco, Logan cashed a check for $10,000 for his superior in the Indian Department, J.W. Perit Huntington,[3] and another draft for $5,000, the latter for the Warm Springs tribe. This amount of $15,000 in federal greenbacks was placed in a leather money belt "which was arranged and constructed for the purpose of carrying money on his person."[4]

In addition to the recorded and estimated values given above, it is likely that additional gold coins were carried by passengers who stored them in secure places in their staterooms. Just about anyone of means going north to Portland, Victoria, or other destinations would have taken money with them, often in substantial amounts. Thus, the total value of all coins aboard could have easily crossed the $500,000 mark, with one estimate reaching $526,000. As time passed, estimates of the value of the treasure escalated, such as in an account in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 1922, which put the amount as "$2,000,000 in gold and silver."

Regardless of what the actual total may have been, it is likely most coins were in the convenient form of $20 double eagles, the denomination of choice for shipments and transfers of large amounts.

Legal Tender Notes

The largest value cash shipment known to have been put aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* in late July 1865 was under the supervision of Major Ellery W. Eddy, age 35, a native of Newport, RI, who had arrived on the West Coast in the glory days of 1849, thus earning the coveted status of a California *pioneer*. Subsequently, he had been a San Francisco tradesman and partner in Newhall, Eddy & Co., auctioneers, who among other activities sold to the highest bidder goods in incoming ship cargoes as they were unloaded. In 1861 he signed on with the United States Army as a lieutenant. In the summer of 1865 he requested the assignment to go north on the *Brother Jonathan*, and his commander obligingly substituted his name for that of Major Fay, who had been originally named to make the trip.



Legal Tender $5 note of the early 1860s. Paper money of this denomination was no doubt among the currency shipped in the care of Major Ellery W. Eddy on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on July 28, 1865. (Brilliant and Sieck Collections)

On July 27th Major Eddy came to the dock not with gold coins, but with bundles containing $200,000 in federal Legal Tender "greenback" notes intended to pay troops and government agents at Fort Vancouver, Walla Walla, and other stations in Oregon and Washington. This cache of paper money was intended to be unloaded at the first stop, Portland. No doubt Eddy's clerk, Charles E. Belden, was on hand as well. The notes were counted, witnessed by Charles A. Caskin (pay clerk for the U.S. Army), and taken under guard to the ship the night before the ship's departure. From that point onward, either Eddy or his aide, Belden, guarded what amounted to a fortune in currency. By the next morning, the notes had been placed in a sturdy iron

[1] DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*: "Doblier was the name or brand of all of the safes received in New York from France during the period this ship was built, such being standard for the vessels made in Williamsburgh from 1849 to 1855. After that, American safes were being placed aboard the ships exclusively. Edward Mills evidently had received a safe from France, and it was placed in the purser's cabin as the vessel was being built. There is no indication the safe was ever replaced. Therefore it is the conclusion of the DSR staff that the safe on board *Brother Jonathan* is the very same that was placed on-board at her construction in the ways in New York, and it is a 'Doblier' type." • Alternatively, as the *Brother Jonathan* was rebuilt several times, including the rearrangement of storage rooms and deck configuration, the safe(s) may have been of some other type.

[2] These were the standard locations of safes on a typical ship built by Perrine, Patterson & Stack, Williamsburgh, NY, in the 1850s.

[3] Circa 1862, Huntington had been named to replace William H. Rector in that post, in 1849 Rector had been a partner in the Oregon Exchange Company, minter of $5 and $10 gold coins.

[4] Dudley L. McClure, "Dalles City: The U.S. Mint that Never Struck a Coin," *Coins* magazine, April and June 1980. The quotation is from Aurelia Munger, cited in the article. This account, believed to be factual, is at wide divergence from later (post 1865) accounts which suggest that Logan was carrying from $10,000, up to $105,000, in gold coins.

[5] DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*.

safe in Eddy's stateroom, and a wax seal had been affixed to the key aperture plate. The denominations were not stated in any records examined, but it is likely that such values as $1, $5, and $10 predominated, as these would have been convenient for payroll purposes.

In the context of West Coast commerce, Legal Tender paper notes continued to be unusual and unwanted in 1865, as they had no use *at face value* in trade in California or any of the towns or cities along the coast, including their destination in Oregon. Gold coins continued to be employed for large transactions, with change being made by silver. However, payrolls for federal agencies and for military troops were paid in paper money, such policy having been dictated by congressmen in the East, most of whom had never visited the West Coast and who knew little about it.

"Fallen Angels" and Other Passengers

As might be expected, passengers buying tickets for passage on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan's* voyage departing on July 28, 1865, came from all walks of life—low life as well as high society, the poor and the wealthy, the old and the young. Those making the trip aboard the *Brother Jonathan* were on many different missions. And, no doubt, in addition to the seemingly fine people who were recorded in one way or another in accounts, there were likely some scamps and rogues. Gamblers often traveled on steamers and ran games of cards and dice in the main lounge or in a stateroom, such activities helping while away the passing hours.

On this particular trip, most passengers recorded in the California Steam Navigation Company's records purchased first class tickets offering cabin accommodations on the main deck. Most of the numerous berths in steerage were empty.

This was not a leisurely cruise, nor was any coastwise travel of the time viewed as entertainment. Rather, the steamer was the only practical way to travel north to Portland, Victoria, and other ports of call. Inland travel was uncertain at best and was mainly reserved for short trips between towns or transfers of military personnel to inland camps. Railroads, which linked nearly all towns in the East, did not yet connect cities on the West Coast.

Among the more newsworthy passengers on the *Brother Jonathan* were Rosanna (Mrs. John C.) Keenan, the keeper of a lager beer saloon in Victoria,[1] and seven girls (said to have been "fallen angels") in her employ including Mrs. Martha Stott (who was traveling with her young son) and pretty, teen-aged Martha E. Wilder.

Certain later historians cast Mrs. Keenan as the proprietor of a San Francisco brothel—which she may have been—and stated that she and her employees were heading north to Victoria to seek new customers and opportunities.[2] If so, no doubt she hoped to profit from the boisterous devil-may-care activities of that northern city, which in the 1860s was experiencing the waning days of the gold rush on the nearby Fraser River. In any event, Mrs. Keenan traveled with thousands of dollars' value in jewels, and she and her fellow travelers occupied first-class accommodations with a nice view of the scenery along the way. The full, true story of Mrs. Keenan and her employees will probably forever elude historians, as little of a factual nature has ever been recorded in American history concerning madams and their courtesans in any era or location. However, spicy stories abound.[3]

In the 1850s Mrs. Keenan and her husband had owned one of the great entertainment spots in Sacramento, the Fashion at 39 J Street, between 2nd and 3rd streets, a watering hole that advertised as being in a "rank with the very first class houses of the kind in the country."[4] The Fashion was but a few footsteps from the dental office of William W. Light, corner of 3rd and J streets, Light having been a factor in the production of gold coins for J.S. Ormsby of the same city. In 1865 at the time of the departure of the *Brother Jonathan*, the Keenans kept a liquor saloon in San Francisco at the southwest corner of First and Stevenson streets, apparently having established themselves there in recent times.[5] They also managed the once-elegant Oriental Hotel and the hotel's restaurant at the southwest corner of Bush and Stevenson streets.

Not far away from the cabins of the Keenan group on the *Brother Jonathan*, Nathalie Shirpser was staying in the nicely appointed "Bridal Room," a favorite for honeymooners. The 17-year-old miss is said to have been "of great beauty and accomplishments,"[6] and was planning to enjoy her trip, although she seems to have been traveling solo with no groom in sight.

As announced in the San Francisco papers, General George Wright, traveling with his wife, was on the way to assume his new post at Fort Vancouver under the Department of Columbia (as the authority for the district was known). Founded in 1825 as a palisaded fort, the settlement served as a central trading depot for the territories of southern Washington and northern Oregon

[1] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August [illegible] 1865.
[2] Don Marshall, *California Shipwrecks*, p. 159. [illegible] with popular parlance, certain later accounts referred to the [illegible] doves" and "fallen angels." Lewis & Dryden [illegible].
[3] Similarly, for the gold boom town of Cripple Creek, Colorado, which flourished from the early 1890s through the [illegible] of the present century, many tales have been [illegible] concerning the [illegible] there, which occupied a [illegible].
[4] *Samuel Colville's Sacramento Directory 1855-1856*, p. [illegible]
[5] Langley's 1864-5 *San Francisco Directory* [illegible] in that city, but the 1865 [illegible] "Additional Names, Removals, [illegible]" [illegible] ably Mrs. also operated a "lager saloon" at the [illegible] corner of First and Stevenson streets.
[6] Later account in *Alta California*, [illegible] 1890 [illegible] about Miss Shirpser is in Appendix III.

39 FASHION 39

The above well known SALOON, situated in the most central part of the city,

No. 39 J street,
BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD STREETS,
SACRAMENTO,

Still continues to be kept by the undersigned, who supervises every department of the house personally, and who has spared neither pains nor expense in placing the

FASHION

in rank with the very FIRST CLASS HOUSES of the kind in the country.

THE BAR,

As heretofore, will be found at all times supplied with the most choice

Liquors and Cigars.
served up in the most proper manner. EVERY TASTE SUITED.

LUNCH

Is served up every day at 11 o'clock A. M., and 9 o'clock P. M.

Thankful for the very liberal patronage extended, he trusts by undivided attention to merit a continuance.

JNO. C. KEENAN, Proprietor,
39 J street, between 2d and 3d,
SACRAMENTO.

Advertisement for the Fashion, John Keenan's saloon in Sacramento in the 1850s. In the following decade his wife Rosanna, said to have been the keeper of a bordello, and seven of her "fallen angels" were passengers aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. (*Sacramento Directory, 1853-1854*)

The "Invasion" of Port Townsend

Victor Smith (a.k.a. Joseph Vials Smith), who had recently survived the wreck of the *Golden Rule* on Roncador Reef in the Caribbean Sea was aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, although he was still suffering from extreme sunburn and other effects of exposure from the earlier disaster.[1]

Smith had begun his career as an attorney, later becoming a newspaperman in Ohio with the Cincinnati *Commercial* (where he wrote extensively about railroads, among other specialties), and still later serving in Lincoln's 1860 presidential campaign.[2] In the early 1860s he was a protégé of fellow Ohioan and long-time pal, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, under whose authority federal lighthouses, Revenue Service ships, and Custom House installations were managed.

Chase accepted the position of secretary of the Treasury on March 6, 1861, just two days after Lincoln was inaugurated. In his post Chase had the opportunity to pass out about 10,000 patronage jobs. As part of this largesse, Victor Smith was hired by the Treasury Department in May 1861, and on August 27 he was appointed collector of customs for the Puget Sound District. According to Smith himself (this cannot be substantiated by existing records) he was also a "special agent of the Treasury Department" with very broad powers including making contracts and engaging in intelligence operations. Smith could do no wrong in Chase's eyes—thus setting the scenario for one of the strangest episodes in the history of the Pacific Northwest.[3]

Smith was interested in certain real estate near Port Angeles on Puget Sound, which, it was hoped, would prosper under the new name of Cherbourg. It was hyped as being the Pacific Northwest's equivalent to the French town of the same name on the English Channel.[4] About 1860 he had purchased over two dozen acres in the proposed settlement. Smith, with his new Treasury Department appointment plus his expanded claims of authority, returned to Puget Sound in 1861 and set about making changes that would increase his personal assets.

Unfortunately, for his development plans, the Custom House of which Smith was in charge was located in Port Townsend. That would not do, and Smith resolved to move it to Port Angeles. He wrote to the Treasury Department on October 4, 1861, to describe its present site as being in "the collection of huts known as Port Townsend," and glowingly described Port Angeles,[5] 40 miles to the west, as having better facilities including a better harbor. About the same time he disclosed to the Treasury Department that he owned 25 acres of real estate in Port Angeles and intended to make his residence there. He boldly suggested that Secretary Chase personally issue an edict to transfer the Custom House, bypassing any legislative inquiry, "as Congress has never legislated on the subject."

Meanwhile, under his own name and also by using *noms de plume*, Smith wrote many letters to newspapers in the Pacific Northwest, condemning Port Townsend. Many of these letters included blatant lies, such as one published in the latter town in the *North-West*, January 1862, in which he stated that he had "no pecuniary interest in the town of Port Angelos and shall never acquire one." As can readily be imagined, by early 1862, Smith was *persona non grata* in Port Townsend.

The *North-West* carried this item on January 11, 1862:

> HUNG IN EFFIGY: This morning a haggard looking effigy was seen suspended from the truck of the pole at the Custom House, where the U.S. Revenue flag is wont to fly. We learn it was labeled to represent Victor Smith, Esq., Collector. However disagreeable a man may succeed in making himself in a community, we think there are other channels of popular expression more in accordance with good taste than hanging up a stuffed figure to represent their idea of his deserts....

[1] At about 3:30 a.m. on May 30, 1865, a lookout aboard the *Golden Rule*, steaming in the Caribbean far off the coast of Nicaragua, sighted an unexpected reef off the bow. Some said that the captain had not taken into account a strong current and thought he was at a position 20 to 25 miles distant. (An account by Paul Martin in *Port Angeles*...., p. 27, noted that some passengers stated the captain was drunk, and the crew members were "consorting with illicit companions.") The engines were stopped and thrown into reverse, but not in time, and about two minutes later the ship slammed onto Roncador Reef. The main feed from the steam boilers to the engine was broken, and the ship wallowed helplessly in the surf, which became heavier as the hours passed. Boats were lowered, and to provide additional capacity, the masts were cut down and used to fashion rafts. During the daylight and following evening hours, 231 women and children had been transported to safety on an island about six miles away. On the next day, May 31, many other passengers, along with many provisions and pieces of equipment, left the *Golden Rule*, which by that time was beginning to break apart. The first officer was sent off to New Providence, 90 miles distant, to seek help. Meanwhile, the chief engineer rigged a distilling apparatus to provide fresh water. Stranded passengers ate birds' eggs and hard biscuits. By June 6 the *Golden Rule* had broken into splinters and was no longer visible across the water. On June 9, the military steamer *U.S. Huntsville* and *U.S.S. State of Georgia* arrived from Aspinwall, Panama, rescued the castaways, who were not injured and suffered only from light exposure, and took them back to Panama. It was reported that there was $1,400,000 (or $1,500,000; accounts vary) in gold aboard the *Golden Rule*. Soon thereafter, the Revenue Cutter *[illegible]* arrived at Roncador Reef with divers and apparatus. The specie, all stored in the ship's safe, was recovered. A reported additional $3,000,000 in Legal Tender notes went missing, said by some to have been taken by Victor Smith (which seems unlikely). News of the wreck was brought to San Francisco on June [illegible], 1865, via the S.S. *Sacramento* from Panama.

[2] Smith may have worked with the Cincinnati *Gazette* as well.

[3] Meanwhile, not far from Secretary Chase's office in Washington, D.C., Spencer M. Clark, another Treasury Department employee, was running his office (which supervised the distribution of Legal Tender notes, Fractional Currency, and other paper money) [illegible] young female employees of the Department to become drunk, after which Clark would seduce them (detailed accounts of an investigation into the matter, conducted by Lafayette C. Baker, were eventually published in the popular press and in book form in Baker's reminiscences). Any historian wanting to write an especially spicy chapter about the administration of Abraham Lincoln would do well to check into the activities of the secretary of the Treasury.

[4] Paul Martin, *Port Angeles, Washington: A History*, pp. [illegible]. This is the prime source for much of the material used here. • The scheme was managed by the recently formed Cherbourg Land Co. The area was also known as Dungeness and False Dungeness.

[5] Also spelled as Port *Angelos* at the time.

In the meantime, in the town of Port Angeles, a.k.a. Cherbourg, a trading post had been set up by Smith's brother-in-law, Samuel Stork. Development was proceeding, albeit slowly.

Smith came up with his latest brilliant idea: He would try to influence the government to acquire acreage as a federal reserve in the area and set it aside as a "National City." Residential lots would be laid out as a part of a townsite. The public would purchase these properties, houses would be built by the new owners, and Smith himself would be in charge of the new metropolis. Uncle Sam would add some much-needed revenue to his coffers to help finance the Civil War then in progress. In fact, not until the government realized at least $50,000 from the venture would there be any remuneration to the proposers such as Smith.

In a series of transactions Smith added many acres to his holdings at Cherbourg, eventually controlling a significant percentage of the parcel, which in its entirety measured about five and one-half miles wide by one mile inland from the shore.[1] Land amounting to 3,520 acres was purchased in 1862 by the federal government as the Port Angeles Townsite Reserve. A city plan for about 500 acres, modeled after Cincinnati, was drawn up—with main streets laid out parallel to the waterfront. On March 10, 1863, the government designated the townsite as the "Second National City" (the first being Washington, D.C.).[2] The Cherbourg name did not stick, and the "National City" became known by the traditional designation of Port Angeles.

In the meantime, Smith's actions were called into question. In April 1862 he went to Washington, D.C., to attempt to clarify the situation and clear his name. Meanwhile, exercising his presumed authority as an agent of the Treasury Department, he requested that Captain J.S.S. Chaddock of the Revenue Cutter *Joseph Lane* appoint one of his officers to take care of the Port Townsend Custom House in his absence.[3] First Lieutenant James H. Merryman was assigned to the task. Soon, Merryman discovered many irregularities in Smith's accounts. As the investigations widened, more incriminating evidence came to light.

Charges against Smith included that he had granted shares in his Port Angeles townsite development to certain employees of the U.S. Treasury Department, that $5,760.90 in public funds entrusted to his care was missing, that he had loaned $1,000 of government money to a person to whom he was personally indebted in the amount of $886, and more. In total, some $15,000 in federal funds had been improperly used or were unaccounted for. Protests were lodged with Gen. George Wright and with William Pickering, governor of Washington Territory. It seemed most observers that Smith's career in the Pacific Northwest had come to a justly deserved end.

However, on August 1, 1862, Victor Smith unexpectedly reappeared at Port Townsend aboard the Revenue Cutter *Shubrick*, having persuaded Treasury officials in Washington that there was no problem.[4] His authority seemingly reinforced, he demanded that Lt. Merryman give up to him all of the Custom House records. Merryman doubted the authority of such a request and demanded to see Smith's orders directing the transfer.

Smith—who, apparently, had no such orders—did not respond to Merryman, but went back on board the *Shubrick* and ordered the commander of the revenue cutter, Lieutenant J.E. Wilson, to load the ship's cannon and "fairly point" them toward the Custom House and the adjacent business district of Port Townsend. Smith threatened that unless the records were turned over to him, the town would be shelled!

Smith sent a group of armed sailors from the *Shubrick* ashore to the Custom House to demand the records. Merryman asked if there was a commissioned officer among them, and learned there was not. He told the men to return to the *Shubrick*. A short time later, Lt. Wilson, directed by Smith, arrived and stated that he was going to take the Custom House by force. Merryman stated that Smith had no right to the records, but to avoid bloodshed, he would surrender them, provided he could have receipts for what was taken away. The records were tossed into barrels and crates, taken aboard the *Shubrick,* and transported to Port Angeles. The scenario escalated from the improbable to the unbelievable, and in due course Smith decommissioned the Revenue Cutter *Joseph Lane* and ordered that she be towed and moored opposite his residence in Port Angeles, negated the current contract held by the steamer *Eliza Anderson* to carry the United States mail and assigned the Revenue Cutter *Shubrick* to this, and discontinued the watch for smugglers in Puget Sound. With some justification, at this point he could have been called Emperor Smith.

[1] Owners prior to the government's purchase had included Alexander Sampson (whose personal papers are preserved by the University of Washington Library), Ed Stanton, William W. Winsor, and Rufus Holmes. The last-named was later appointed by Smith to be collector of customs duties at the removed office in Port Angeles. After being in office for 19 months and being accused of great negligence—smugglers were operating with a freedom not before known to them—Holmes was fired. William Winsor, who operated the Rough and Ready Saloon, was among those charged with smuggling. Alexander Sampson was given a job as lighthouse keeper on Tatoosh Island, Cape Flattery, where Smith's father had been stationed earlier. The light on Tatoosh island had its own problems, and the *Report of the Secretary of the Interior,* December 2, 1858, noted in part (pp. 584,589): "One Indian chief, who lives on Tatooch [*sic*] Island, where a light house has been recently erected, has been very insolent to the keeper of the light. He, in one or two instances, struck the keeper, and threatened to kill him, and that he also destroyed some public property.... The light house is a great source of grievance to them [the native Indians]. They profess to believe that it keeps the whales from coming as usual, and they also say that it is on their land, and that we have no right to put it there without their consent."

[2] There was only one other "National City" designated—Anchorage, Alaska, decades later.

[3] Chaddock would figure in the final voyage of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in July 1865.

[4] The *Shubrick* was a small sidewheel steamer with two auxiliary sails.

Port Townsend as shown in an 1878 view. (Lithograph by A.L. Bancroft & Co., San Francisco; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art specimen as reproduced by John W. Reps, *Panoramas of Promise*)

The protests of the residents of Port Townsend were long and loud.

In October 1862, a grand jury convened and indicted Smith on 13 counts, including embezzling government funds, unauthorized possession and use of government equipment (the Revenue Cutter *Joseph Lane*), and the unlawful takeover of public land. To the amazement of nearly everyone, Smith explained away all but four of the 13 charges. The four remaining counts were serious enough that it seemed that a conviction would be forthcoming: 1. Embezzlement of federal funds. 2. Resistance to officers of the law. 3. Procuring false documents and vouchers. 4. Assault on the citizens of Port Townsend.

However, the wily Smith emerged triumphant, and soon thereafter he was completely exonerated by an action of the U.S. Treasury Department. His pal Salmon P. Chase had come through again!

Undaunted, and free of the indictment nuisance, Victor Smith pursued his personal plans with renewed vigor. As part of his machinations, a new lighthouse was authorized on March 3, 1863, and completed in 1865 on Ediz Hook at Port Angeles. Smith had the Treasury Department appoint his father, George K. Smith, as keeper.[1] The "Port Angeles Library Association building" was entered on government records by Smith, but to this day no one has been able to find that it was ever constructed.

What of the second National City? Platted into 803 town lots and offered at auction on May 4, 1864, the offering attracted only 22 buyers, who purchased 34 lots and three blocks, yielding Uncle Sam's bank account just $4,570.25, or less than one 10th of the minimum of $50,000 which Smith had expected. The buyers were mostly those who had settled on the plots earlier, including some of the 200 people, mostly from nearby Port Townsend, who had been influenced by Smith to take part in what he called a great "real estate boom."

Smith vs. Henry

The Smith affair became increasingly untenable to residents of Port Townsend and the nearby area. [illegible] Dr. Anson G. Henry, a former Illinoisan and a longtime friend of President Abraham Lincoln. Henry had no respect for Smith, considered the entire situation to be contrary to the

[1] Harriet Fish, in "1st White Woman Arrives" in the Port Angeles *Daily News*, September 19, 1982, told about Smith's wife Caroline and her four children. In later years she lived in a small house on Ediz Hook, [illegible] from the lighthouse, and had a [illegible] organ which Smith had ordered for her and which arrived in 1865. According to the account, Caroline Smith was well known for the concerts she played on it, including the [illegible] ing of sailors who listened from nearby ships [illegible]. The [illegible] have been a small portable reed organ—[illegible] was reported that she carried the organ aboard a [illegible] the U.S.S. *Pensacola* to give a concert for the crew.

interests of the government and American citizens, and vowed to do something about it. By this time, Smith had alienated just about every public official of importance in the Washington Territory.

In late winter and early spring 1863 Henry visited the East and for a time stayed at the White House as the president's guest. On March 21, 1863, Lincoln wrote to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase saying: "Will the Secretary of the Treasury do me the favor to hear my old friend Dr. Henry briefly about Victor Smith."

The Smith situation had long since become a *cause célèbre.* Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg would write:[1]

> Letters of protest and memorials of remonstrance came to Lincoln from Puget Sound citizens who wanted Victor Smith thrown out of the collector's office in that district. Smith had been an Ohio man, a personal and political friend of Chase. He was an abolitionist, a spiritualist,[2] talked his pet "isms" freely and freshly, believed in spirit rappings,[3] and was an "eccentric functionary." He gave to Brooks his view that he had "so intertwined himself in the fibers of the government that his removal from office was an impossibility." While collector of customs at Port Townsend, Washington Territory, Victor Smith managed to induce the government to move the customhouse to another place named Port Angeles, one of several performances which, combined with Victor Smith's arrogant personal manners, raised an outcry from businessmen, politicians, and ordinary citizens that he was a nuisance and an evil to the West Coast.
>
> Joining in the demands that came to Lincoln for Smith's removal and the return of the Custom House to its first point were, according to Brooks, every other federal officer and nearly every prominent citizen in the Puget Sound district. Among the prominent citizens seeking Victor Smith's official scalp was Anson G. Henry, formerly of Springfield, Illinois, and personal physician years back to a sufferer from hypochondria named Abraham Lincoln, who as President had appointed Henry surveyor general for the Territory of Washington. Henry was among those who gave their word to the president that Victor Smith was a [illegible] and might show Smith a defaulter.
>
> A delegation that seemed to include everybody then in Washington, official and unofficial, from the Pacific Coast called at the White House and filed with the President formal charges against Victor Smith and called for his removal. Lincoln told them Secretary Chase was out of town and to return in a few days, which they did, but Secretary Chase was still out of town. On Friday, then, Lincoln sent Chase a note to "please send me at once an appointment of Henry Clay Wilson" to replace Victor Smith. The note was official. But Lincoln had added that same Friday another note beginning, "I address this to you personally rather than officially because of the nature of the case." He explained to Chase that his mind was made up to remove Victor Smith, yet in so doing he had not decided that the charges against Smith were true but had only decided that the dissatisfaction with Victor Smith was too great. "But I believe he is your personal acquaintance and friend, and if you desire it I will try to find some other place for him."
>
> Chase arrived in Washington Saturday night and learned from an assistant secretary of the Treasury that the president had directed that particular assistant secretary to make out a commission for a new collector in place of Victor Smith. Chase on Monday wrote to Lincoln: "This information surprised and greatly pained me; for I had not thought it possible that you would remove an officer of my department without awaiting the result." Also on this Monday Chase read a note from Lincoln saying that he had learned that the man, Henry Clay Wilson, he had appointed Friday to replace Victor Smith was dead, and therefore Lincoln would appoint one Frederick A. Wilson.
>
> Again Chase sent to Lincoln his resignation. And according to Maunsell B. Field, third assistant secretary of the Treasury (who wrote that he made notes of the conversation on the day it took place), the president had this to say about the resignation he found on his office table:
>
> "I waited until evening, and then ordered my carriage and drove to his house. I found him in the office to the left as you enter the door. I went directly up to him with the resignation in my hand, and, putting my arm around his neck, said to him, 'Chase, here is a paper with which I wish to have nothing to do; take it back, and be reasonable.' I then explained to him what had occurred while I was away. I told him that the man whom I had appointed happened to have been dead several weeks; that I couldn't replace the person whom I had removed—that was impossible—but that I would appoint anyone else whom he should select for the place. It was difficult to bring him to terms; I had to plead with him a long time, but I finally succeeded, and heard nothing more of *that* resignation."
>
> Two days later Lincoln sent Chase a letter giving his approval to several matters and closing, "Please send me over the commission for Lewis C. Gunn, as you recommended, for collector of customs at Puget Sound." Victor Smith besought Chase to have himself reappointed and Chase replied that Smith was mistaken as to the influence of words from Chase to the Administration. "If any word of mine would make you collector again you would be reappointed."
>
> In one phase the Victor Smith affair was a duel of political strength as between Smith and Dr. A.G. Henry, Lincoln's old Springfield medical adviser. Though Smith and Dr. Henry were followers of the spiritualist cult and believed they could talk with the dead and departed of another realm, the two men loathed each other and never spoke as they passed by.

In the best political tradition—and in view of Smith's not having been convicted of any wrongdoing—the awkward situation was neatly solved by giving Victor Smith a new and *higher* appointment! Soon, Smith was special agent for the Treasury Department to oversee revenue collections for the *entire* Pacific coast.[4] The fox was back in the henhouse!

[1] Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years,* Volume II (of four volumes) Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York, 1939, pp. 626 ff.

[2] Smith was a friend of Andrew Jackson Davis, New York City, editor of the *Banner of Light,* a weekly spiritualist newspaper.

[3] In their home near Rochester, NY, 16-year-old Margaret Fox and her sister Katharine, 13, caused interest, beginning in 1848, when it seemed that in their presence, the spirits of departed souls could communicate by a series of rapping sounds, which, they revealed 40 years later, was caused by moving their double-jointed toes. The young girls had intended the whole affair as a prank, but they fooled their mother so effectively that they were reluctant to disclose the deception. One thing led to another, and the team of Margaret and Katharine became a great sensation, toured widely and gave public and private sessions to an eager public, meanwhile garnering a substantial fortune. In the 1860s, during the time of Victor Smith's ascendancy, spirit rapping was all the rage and was practiced nationwide.

[4] Sources include Lucile McDonald, "In 1860s a Customs Collector Waged Territory's One-Man 'Civil War,'" *Seattle Times,* July 2, 1961; C. Milbrun

While he was in the latter service he was aboard the star-crossed *Golden Rule*. Even his near-death in the *Golden Rule* disaster on Roncador Reef had its unexplained consequences: Smith was later accused of stealing some $3,000,000 in greenbacks that he had been guarding on the voyage!

Meanwhile, not only was the Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase on Smith's side, but the angels of fate were also kind. On December 16, 1863, at about six o'clock in the evening, a torrential downpour swept away a natural earthen dam on a nearby hill, which unleashed a ravaging flood through part of Port Angeles and carried away (or, per another account, severely damaged) the Smith residence. Fortunately, Mrs. Smith and the couple's four children escaped—but barely. As for Victor himself, he was not at home.[1]

Anson G. Henry

Ironically, Dr. Anson G. Henry, the nemesis of Smith, was also traveling north from San Francisco on the *Brother Jonathan* on the July 28, 1865 trip. Henry, who had lived in Oregon and Washington for many years, had been appointed as the new governor of Washington Territory.

Dr. Henry's ties to Abraham Lincoln went back to the 1830s, when both lived in Springfield, Illinois. Henry was Lincoln's personal physician. Among the many accounts of Henry that can be found in the annals of Lincoln's life is this letter by Lincoln to John T. Stuart, January 20, 1841, following up on an earlier recommendation Lincoln had made to secure for Henry the postmastership of Springfield. Lincoln's romance with Mary Todd had suffered a setback on January 1st, and he had become confused and depressed, so much that he was absent from his seat in the State Legislature from the 13th to the 19th.[2] His letter of the 20th comments on a situation that was touched upon by historian Carl Sandburg:[3]

> I have, within the last few days, been making a most discreditable exhibition of myself in the way of hypochondriasm [depression] and thereby got an impression that Dr. Henry is necessary to my existence. Unless he gets that place [postmastership of Springfield] he leaves Springfield. You therefore see how much I am interested in this matter... This, together with what you know of the dr.'s position and merits I sincerely hope will secure him the appointment. My heart is very much set upon it...

Anson G. Henry did not get the postmastership. Eventually, Henry moved to Umatilla, Oregon, and became active in politics and agriculture there. He retained his friendship with Lincoln, and the latter wrote to him on occasion, including concerning his presidential election campaigns of 1860 and 1864.

Also on Board

Among other passengers who boarded the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* in San Francisco on July 28, 1865, were Mrs. John Hemsley and her six-year-old son, who were on their way to Portland, where they planned to head inland to Idaho and visit John, the head of their household, who was seeking his fortune in the gold mines near Boise. He dearly missed his family and could hardly wait to see his loved ones again.

The family of Captain N.C. Brooks was heading north to join him in Portland on board the family-owned bark, the *Cambridge*, which would then sail across the Pacific to Honolulu in the Sandwich Islands. Probably, the Brooks clan was in one or two staterooms on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*.

Captain J.S.S. Chaddock of the United States Revenue Cutter *Joseph Lane* was traveling north and planned to be back on board the *Joe Lane* (as it was usually called) soon, and was probably quartered in style as well. It will be recalled that Chaddock played a minor part in the saga involving Victor Smith and the "invasion" of Port Townsend.

James Nisbet, outspoken editor of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, was also on board. True to his profession, he carried paper and a pencil (which would later prove to be very useful, but not in any way that Nisbet had intended when he bought his ticket).

Among younger passengers, Ed Cardiff and three friends had come to San Francisco from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and were headed north to Oregon, where Ed's brother was in the lumber business. Probably, the would-be woodsmen bought steerage passage, as many travelers did. Accommo-

Boundy, "Custom House Dispute, Rise and Fall of 2nd National City," typescript in the History Department of the University of Washington; and Norman R. Smith, unpublished manuscript, "Victory," in the collection of the Clallam County (Washington) Genealogical Society. The situation was discussed by Robert H. Smith, "Victor Smith Steals the Port Townsend Custom House," *The Log*, August 30 September 12, 1996. • Is Victor Smith to be remembered as a scoundrel, or as a hero? You decide. On June 19, 1972, Port Angeles celebrated "Victor Smith Day," for "Victor Smith the pioneer who promoted the congressional act which created a military reserve in what is now Port Angeles... Smith's dream was to establish a city. Mayor C. Vernon Basom said that he urges all citizens of our area to join us in this recognition of our historical past." (cf. announcement on the front page of the Port Angeles *Daily News*, June 15, 1972, nothing was mentioned of Smith's checkered past, and, presumably, local citizens enjoyed celebrating the memory of their hero.)

[1] Sources include "Story of Flood in 1863 That Destroyed Part of Port Angeles Told in Old Newspaper Article," Port Angeles *Evening Express*, March 19, 1934. In part: "[With the deluge] the residence of Mr. Victor Smith, with all of the out-buildings, storehouses, etc., all went in a movement. Mrs. Smith fortunately escaped, saving her children, though she had to struggle through the raging flood to reach the ground." (Citation courtesy of W.E. Seton) • The residents of Port Townsend wanted "their" Custom House back, and on July 25, 1866, appropriate action in this regard was taken. In September, the facilities were moved. The town of Port Angeles remained virtually dormant for about the next 20 years. In the late 1880s, good economic times arrived, and within the next several decades Port Angeles was transformed into a thriving community. It has never looked back.

[2] Lincoln had been engaged to Todd, and on January 1, 1841, all was in readiness for the wedding to be held that day, but Lincoln had second thoughts, felt that he was not in love, and did not appear. He finally married Todd on November 4, 1842, in the home of Ninian W. Edwards, the site where the wedding had been scheduled to take place nearly two years earlier.

[3] *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, 1926, Vol. 1, p. 262.

dations were in the hold of the ship, but were clean and well kept. The quality of the below-decks berths and rooms was much finer on the rebuilt *Brother Jonathan* than usually seen on steamers of the era. There several reasons for this, including a high number of repeat passengers who regularly traveled from San Francisco to Portland and return, and the competition mounted by other ships, particularly the *S.S. Sierra Nevada*. The vast majority of contemporary accounts reveal that the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was well liked and considered to be a fine ship in every regard.

Of the over 200 other persons on the ship, no doubt stories could be written about each.

Get Ready, Get Set, Go

On the morning of Friday, July 28, all crew members and most of the passengers were on board by nine, set for the casting off of the lines at noon. All or nearly all of the cabins were assigned as were some steerage spaces—the latter remaining mostly unoccupied. Trunks and boxes were brought to the ship and stored. The crew acquainted those new to the experience with the amenities of shipboard. Probably, some attention was paid to the life-saving equipment which included four large Francis-patent metal boats, two smaller wooden surfboats, and more than enough cotton-covered, cork-filled life vests to go around, some 397 by actual count.

Throughout the morning upward of two dozen latecomers—or even as many as 50—boarded the vessel, intending to pay the purser for their passage. Thus, their names were not registered with the on-shore ticket office. Rushing aboard ship at the last moment was a common practice, especially for experienced travelers who used the route frequently and did not wish to reserve a cabin. Additional latecomers may have paid cash to the ship's officers, providing another reason not to be listed in company accounts. In any event, the California Steam Navigation Company's records that were kept for this and other voyages were imprecise. In addition to having an incomplete register and count of passengers, the records contained many spelling errors and other inaccuracies. Sometimes entries were general in nature, such as on this particular trip, the notation "Two Indians."

The office of the California Steam Navigation Company had a record of the crewmen and most of the passengers, but at the last minute some changes were made. Joseph Lord, senior messenger for Wells, Fargo & Co., had not traveled the northern route for six months, as lower senior messengers in his employ were normally assigned. However, something came up, and Lord filled the post for the occasion. Substitutions in the crew were made of a steward, clerk, pantry man, and a waiter, but it is not known if names on the original record were changed in all instances. Jacob Yates was a crew member and served as quartermaster, but the records omitted his name. Four crew members were Portuguese seamen who had recently come to San Francisco as refugees aboard the *Milo* from whalers captured and burned by the Confederate raider *Shenandoah*. The crew registry did not list them by name.

As the clock hands approached high noon, some 150 identified passengers (per the ship's records and later newspaper accounts) and, perhaps, 20 to 50 others who were never recorded—for a passenger total of 170 to 200—plus about 60 crew members were on board, eager to begin the voyage north. Thus, the total count was 230 to 260 people for the final voyage. Alternatively, Third Officer James Patterson, who was on board at the time and possibly knew better than anyone who later gave a statement, was interviewed by the press, and several of his estimates, some varying from the others, subsequently reached print. One set of figures attributed to him suggested "about 150 cabin, 72 steerage passengers, and about 50 of the officers and crew," providing a total of about 272.[1] Other estimates suggested about 50 crew and 250 passengers—including some late arrivals who may not have registered—for a total of about 300. These figures are higher than an official government inquiry finding prepared later which gave the estimate as 140 passengers and 50 crew members, for a total of 190.

Several hundred more passengers could have been accommodated, mostly in steerage, for the ship's capacity was close to 700. This time she was lightly loaded and was running with more than two-thirds of her berths empty.

Last minute farewells were made to friends and bystanders on the deck, the steam boilers were brought up to operating pressure, and the anchors were hoisted. The ropes were cast off, and power was applied to the two huge paddlewheels on the ship's flanks. Slowly at first, then increasing in speed, she pulled out from the wharf, on her way to destiny.

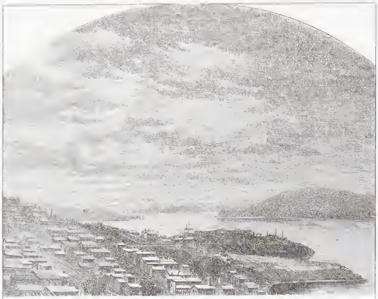
The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* headed through the choppy waves of San Francisco Bay, past Alcatraz Island and Fort Point, through the Golden Gate, and out to sea.

Northward Bound

In the Pacific, scarcely past the entry rocks guarding the Golden Gate, the *Brother Jonathan* ran full tilt into a strong headwind and heavy waves. Under full power and with sails furled, the ship wallowed through the breaking crests, tossing and rocking. Passengers who had looked forward to leisurely meals, games, conversation, music, and reading in the elegantly decorated lounge, were mostly confined to their berths, sick and nauseous. Few had the stomach to take their meals. Supper on Friday evening was lightly attended.

There were no scientific weather forecasts at the time, and a "blow" could end in an hour or could continue for

[1] *Alta California*, August 10, 1865 (from, J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City, August 6).



San Francisco in the summer of 1865, looking toward the setting sun and the Golden Gate beyond which is the Pacific Ocean. (*Beyond the Mississippi*)

days. No one could predict accurately, and there was no way the captain could learn of the sea conditions awaiting him. The northern route had a reputation for wind and waves, but July was usually calmer than the winter months. Thus, there was every hope that the tempest would abate soon.

Hour after hour through the afternoon and into the night, the ship plowed northward a few miles offshore along the rockbound coast, falling hours behind schedule. Saturday was more of the same: high winds, high waves, and little comfort for anyone. Many passengers stayed in their night clothes in their berths. After running for about 36 hours at an average speed of about 8 knots, the steamer reached a point opposite Crescent City, not far from the Oregon border.

For a long time Crescent City had been a place where the *Brother Jonathan* "touched" (per advertisements) long enough to transfer a few passengers and light freight. It was practice to fire a cannon shot as the ship approached, so as to alert anyone wanting to meet the vessel at the dock. Situated along a densely wooded coast and remote from any major population center, Crescent City depended upon the *Brother Jonathan* and other coastwise steamers for supplies, news, and the opportunity to come to or leave from town.[1] The ship was always a welcome visitor.

Threading its way through the channel and several mountainous rocks projecting from the bay outside of the harbor, the *Brother Jonathan* tied up about two on Sunday morning on July 30th, not having been able to make up lost time.[2] No doubt the Crescent City Lighthouse, erected in 1853, helped guide her way at this late hour.

During the next seven and one-half hours, mail, San Francisco newspapers, and a small amount of cargo were offloaded. This time the ship did more than just "touch" shore; all aboard looked forward to a respite from the wind and waves. Joseph A. Lord, the messenger-agent for Wells, Fargo & Co., went ashore to pay a call on his in-laws, the MacGruders, who operated the lighthouse in the harbor. Lord's wife and daughter had arrived in Crescent City earlier and also were visiting at the time, and a few hours of family reunion took place. Meanwhile, most of the passengers were happy to catch some peaceful sleep in their beds during the first steady, quiet time available since departure.

James Patterson, the third officer of the ship, supervised the comings and goings of cargo and the few passengers who wanted to go ashore to stretch their legs.

At about 9:30 on Sunday morning all was set, Mr. Lord and others were back on board, and the ship cast off from the Crescent City wharf. The captain proceeded past the stone breakwater and out of the harbor, intending to run south of St. George Reef,[3] then turn north and continue along the coast. As soon as the breakwater had been cleared and several rocky islands had been passed, the *Brother*

[1] Stage and horseback trails connected Crescent City, but in 1865 there were no railroads in the area.

[2] DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered.* Later recollections by Mary (Tweedale) Altrie, 1894.

[3] A.k.a. St. George Point and Point St. George. The following description of prominent points in the sea off of Crescent City is taken from the *Directory of the U.S. Pacific Coast Survey* as republished in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 4, 1865: "Point St. George. This point lies two miles W by N. from Crescent City light. It is from 50 to 100 feet high, with table-land some distance back. It is bounded by hundreds of rocks, some of which rise perpendicularly 200 feet from the water. Three or four of the largest present a remarkably white appearance which serves to distinguish this point. The extensive reef in the vicinity may have led to confusion among the old discoverers, by their confounding it with Cape Orford. • Dragon Rocks. This name is applied to the rocks and reef extending W.N.W. from Point St. George for a distance of six miles. The locality has never been surveyed in detail, but a wide passage exists inside of the reef, and is invariably used by the mail and coasting steamers, when entering or leaving Crescent City bay. There are 10 or 12 outlying rocks, and many sunken ones, with the passage running between them and those close to shore. This passage is about a mile in width, has 10 fathoms in it, and the general course through is nearly N.W. and S.E., but not straight. Among the multitude of rocks on the land side of the passage are three very large and prominent ones about 200 feet high. It has been already stated that several of the largest rocky islets have a well marked white appearance, occasioned in part by the deposits of sea birds." • Additional information: St. George Point was given that designation by explorer Captain George Vancouver on April 23, 1792, the name being derived from the patron saint of England. The name was later extended to the associated reef and channel. Outcrops below St. George Point were named Dragon Rocks from the tale of St. George and the dragon; Dragon Channel, close by, has the same derivation. In the early 17th century Spanish explorer Sebastian Vizcaino named the point Cabo Blanco de San Sebastian, "on the eve of that glorious martyr." (cf. *California Historical Society Quarterly*, VII, p. 18.) The Spanish name translates to "White Cape of St. Sebastian," the "White" no doubt taken from the bird droppings that covered much of the area. • *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 38-40, noted that General Sebastian Viscaino, Spanish explorer, sailed from Acapulco in 1596 but returned in the same year citing want of provisions and unfortunate conflict with Indians. In 1602 Viscaino had another expedition and in May sailed north from Acapulco to the 42nd degree of latitude, surveying the coast in detail up to about the 26th degree of latitude, after which "he seems to have been satisfied with merely keeping the land in sight." He is credited with the discovery of the ports of San Diego and Monterey in what became California, although San Francisco Bay was not mentioned. Later Viscaino visited Spain, and in 1606 returned.

Jonathan was in the open sea. It was immediately learned that the wind and waves had worsened overnight, although the skies were clear and visibility was excellent. About two hours later, having progressed, perhaps, over a dozen miles, the ship came to a virtual standstill. The captain took his sextant out on the flying bridge and through light haze took a line on the sun.[1] Soon thereafter at noon Jacob Yates, a seaman who was quartermaster of the watch, took over the helm.[2]

Going to the charthouse, the captain marked the vessel's position, which was about four miles north of the latitude of St. George's Reef. The latter reef, the related St. George Channel, and the prominent St. George Point were on most charts and had been listed in the Coastal Survey since 1850. The rocky point and reef were to be avoided, while the channel offered safe passage if carefully navigated.

By then the ship, raked by winds and wallowing in waves estimated to be 25 or more feet high, was several miles offshore and perhaps a dozen or more miles to the northwest of the refuge harbor, although no one was quite sure of the precise location, and later accounts ranged from about 10 miles to 16. In the distance off the starboard side, breakers crashed on the rocky shore, throwing sprays of white foam high into the air. Gathering the officers near him, Captain DeWolf directed Third Officer James Patterson to reset the jib sail. At about 12:45 he gave the command to Quartermaster Yates to turn the ship around and head back to the shelter of the Crescent City harbor. Although it was disappointing to delay the trip, there was cheer that within an hour or so the ship would reach calm waters. To this point the entire time at sea during the voyage, from the start two days earlier in San Francisco, had been uncomfortable for everyone

After running for about 20 minutes on an easterly heading, the *Brother Jonathan* was near Northwest Seal Rock north of Crescent City, one of many offshore outcrops in the area. Typically, these brown and black rocks were home to lounging sea lions at their bases near the shore, while at higher elevations the droppings of sea birds colored the rocks white

Aware of the changing course instructions, most of the crew members were on duty and ready to help. The steerage passengers were mostly below deck, secure in their bunks, hoping that this new onslaught of winds and waves would soon end, and that they could enjoy the normal amenities of ocean travel.

"Southeast by south," DeWolf shouted to helmsman Yates, and the course was altered to about 135° on the magnetic compass, to steam to the south to Crescent City on a path outside of the reef and well off shore. Although the sea was clear around Seal Rock, low-lying haze—"smoke" was the popular term—was at the shore with, perhaps, added cloudiness from a forest fire that had been burning to the northeast.[3] The navigation chart showed a clear way in the track set around Battery Point and the lighthouse, continuing into the harbor shore.

During the next 10 to 15 minutes, with the wind at her stern, the *Brother Jonathan* steamed toward the harbor. The time was about 10 minutes before two o'clock. Captain DeWolf ordered his mate to ready the anchors for the arrival, getting them ready to be lowered by capstans. At the bow of the ship, astride an anchor, the mate saw a dark, ominous outline beneath the surface ahead. He started to yell, but immediately the ship rode the crest of a wave, then crashed down on a huge rock just beneath the water.[4] Her keel was broken somewhere between the bow and the 110-foot foremast. The impact was so forceful that persons standing were thrown off their feet, and the main deck planking separated in several places.

The bottom of the ship, torn apart and hung up on the rocky projection, admitted a flood of seawater to the hold and lower compartments. Meanwhile, Captain DeWolf ordered the paddlewheels to be thrown into reverse. This was done, but the impaled ship did not move at all. Stranded on the rock, the ship was lifted and dropped by a succession of waves, causing the bottom planking to break apart and the rudder and much of the keel to tear loose and float to the surface. The wind and waves turned the ship on the rock until her bow, like a huge weathervane, pointed toward the sea and into the wind. Gigantic crests pounded her sides as planking torn off the bottom and the ship's rudder floated to the surface. No more than five minutes had passed, when the unsupported foremast dropped through the bottom of the ship, and the lower yardarm came to rest across the brass guardrails on the deck.

By now, much of the steerage section was flooded, and passengers—many still in their night garments or otherwise scantily clad—struggled up the crazily tilted stairs and passageways to open air on the main deck, some climbing to the top deck.

[1] Accounts of the last hour of the ship's voyage include data from DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered.*

[2] Yates is not mentioned in any listing of survivors, but was on the crew roster. However, he did survive.

[3] It is not certain whether there were significant forest fires, or whether the "smoke" term referring to low-lying shore haze was assumed by later writers to mean smoke from a forest fire; the latter seems a strong possibility. Further, the wind was blowing strongly from the northwest (cf. statement of Jacob Yates subsequently quoted), and any forest fire smoke would have blown *inland,* not out to sea.

[4] The undersea projection, later named Jonathan Rock, is about eight miles northwest of Crescent City and about three miles east and slightly south of Northwest Seal Rock. The area is delineated in various reports including (cf. Lomax, 1959, p. 345) *Ex. Doc. No. 206,* 41st Congress, *Annual Report* of the Superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1869-70, p. 52, with details on sketch map No. 15 in the appendix. Years later in 1891 a lighthouse was erected on Northwest Seal Rock at a cost of $750,000, said to have been the most expensive such structure ever built. (Earlier, in 1853, a lighthouse had been built in Crescent City.) The light was magnified by a complex system of Fresnel lenses made in France; the unit is now on display at the Del Norte County Museum in Crescent City.

The signal gun was fired at least twice. It is said that at Crescent City nine or more miles in the distance residents became highly excited and wondered what was happening.[1] After all, the *Brother Jonathan* had departed recently, and no new ship arrival was scheduled.

As the minutes slipped by, just about everyone came up from the lower sections of the ship and was fitted with a life preserver, some passengers taking two preservers as there were ample extras on hand. Even though it was in the summer, the water temperature was probably in the 50s, and the howling wind made it seem all the colder. Anyone exposed for more than a few hours would surely die of hypothermia. Meanwhile, the sun shone down from above.

Later, certain of the more fortunate among the participants would tell their stories:

The Helmsman's Tale

Jacob Yates, who was at the helm during the fateful afternoon of July 30, related this:[2]

> On Sunday, when I took the wheel at 12 o'clock, it was blowing a heavy gale of wind from the northwest, and we were four miles above Point St. George. The sea was running mountain high, and the ship was not making any headway. Capt. DeWolf thought it proper to turn back, run into Crescent City, and wait until the storm ceased. He ordered me to put the helm hard a port, which I did, and then he told me to steady her. I did so. Her course was then due east. The time about a quarter to one p.m.
>
> I kept her that course until we made the Seal Rock, and the captain ordered me to keep her southeast by south. It was clear where we were, but foggy and smoky in shore. Then we ran along until 10 minutes of 2 o'clock p.m., when she struck the unknown sunken rock, and with such force that it felled the passengers who were standing on the deck. Some of the deck planks started.
>
> The captain stopped the engine and endeavored to back her off. The engineer could not get her to move an inch. She rolled about five minutes and then gave another tremendous thump on the rock, when part of the keel came up alongside; and by that time the sea and wind had slued her around so that her head came to the wind and sea. As soon as she came head to the sea, she worked off the rock a little; then her foremast went down through her bottom until the foreyard brought up across decks. At this time Captain DeWolf had been forward three times and ordered everybody to look out for themselves, and he would do the best he could for them all. I was the last one that left the forward part of the ship.
>
> As I was going aft I saw a lady and gentleman standing close by the boat. I asked them why they did not get into this boat, for it was ready to lower. And they gave their heads a toss and told me they were going to get in the other boat. There was plenty of room in the boat at that time. As I was one of the crew of the boat, and she was being lowered, I got in her. If they had got in, I would have taken my chances in another.
>
> The boat ahead of us was filled with women. I did not pay any more attention to the boat until she was lowered. The captain said, "There was enough in that boat."
>
> I had not seen Mr. Allen the first officer until the captain ordered our boat lowered; then he lowered one end of it. We got our boat clear from the wreck and astern of the ship. I did not see the second officer at all. As we came around the stern we saw a boat swamped, which was full of women; and one boat capsized with a man on her bottom, and also another one stove to pieces. Our boat was so full that we could not take another soul in it.
>
> We would have gone to the assistance of the boat load of ladies who were swamped, but the sea was running so high and we were so heavily loaded that we could not do anything for them. I believe that if the passengers had listened to the captain and manned the boats with the ship's crew, as he wished them to do, there would have been more lives saved, for there is not a ship that sails out of San Francisco which has a better crew. As for the item mentioning in the *Bulletin* that the crew were Kanakas, I can say that there was not one Kanaka among them."[3]

Third Officer Patterson's Recollections

James Patterson spoke to newspaper reporters who prepared this account:[4]

> James Patterson, third officer of the ill-fated ship, states that when the *Brother Jonathan* passed Crescent City, about one p.m., the sea was running very high, and a severe gale blowing from the northwest—so much that the steamer was making no headway whatever, and Captain DeWolf decided to put back to Crescent City and remain there until the weather moderated.
>
> The jib was set with the intention of bringing her 'round, and when they had almost succeeded in doing so, her bow struck on a sunken rock with a crash that sent everything reeling on deck.
>
> A few minutes previous to this, Patterson had been relieved by the second officer, and had gone below, reaching his bunk just as she struck. He immediately tried to get on deck, but the door of his cabin had been so much sprung by the shock that it was with difficulty he could open it. Just as he reached the deck the vessel lifted from the rock and came down with terrific force, tearing a tremendous hole in the hull just where the foremast rested on the keel. The foremast then dropped right through the bottom of the vessel until the foreyard lay across the deck.
>
> In the meantime the captain and first officer were busy making efforts to lower boats. But no boat could live in such a sea, and the terrified passengers preferred remaining on the ship's deck to facing death in a small boat. The boat that he

[1] *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 2, 1865, dispatch from Camp Lincoln, CA, August 1: "About 2 o'clock p.m. Sunday, the 30th of July, the citizens of Crescent City and vicinity were startled by the boom, boom of a signal gun and were thrown into a state of most intense excitement and anxiety." Apparently, the sound carried for a long distance over the water.

[2] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865. Slightly different wording appeared in the account published in the *Alta California*, August 10, 1865, indicating that at least one, possibly both stories were reconstructed from reporters' notes.

[3] Kanakas were natives of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands) and, loosely defined, natives of Polynesia. Many Kanakas came to San Francisco to participate in the Gold Rush. Some accounts of Kanakas, including this, can be found in Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872, e.g., p. 468): "In hiring a horse from a Kanaka, you must have all your eyes about you, because you can rest satisfied that you are dealing with a shrewd unprincipled rascal." Many other San Franciscans discriminated against Kanakas, considered them to be of a lower class, and made unfavorable comments.

[4] *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 11, 1865, accounts extracted from the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*, *Call*, and *Examiner*.

(Patterson) was placed in charge of was ordered to be let down by the first mate. The names of those saved have already been published—in all, 11 men, four white women, two children, and a Chinawoman and child.

The seamen saved and mentioned in the dispatch as Negroes were Portuguese, among the crew of a whaler recently burned by the *Shenandoah*, and this was their first trip on the *Brother Jonathan*. They are powerful, clean-limbed fellows, and are highly commended for their coolness and bravery on this occasion. With incredible difficulty they succeeded in pushing off from the steamer, and had not left her more than 10 or 15 minutes, when she fired guns. Her bow then began to sink; her stern high up in the air. Gradually the water crept up, until only a small portion of her stern was seen; and then, with a sudden lurch she disappeared—the last thing seen being the distress flag at the mizzen, as it quivered out of sight forever.

William Edward Shields Tells His Story

William Edward Shields, a cabin boy and waiter aboard the ill-fated ship, was subsequently interviewed by an unidentified "special correspondent" of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* who had traveled north to Crescent City on the small coastwise steamer *Del Norte* to file reports of the disaster. Shields' story and related incidents soon reached print:[1]

From one of the crew (Edward Shields) who was saved in the only boat which it is supposed got away from the vessel before she sank, and which was commanded by James Patterson, third officer of the ship, I learn that there were 19 persons saved—11 men, 4 white women, 2 children, and 1 Chinawoman and child.

He says when the vessel struck she had been got around an hour or so to return to Crescent City, as there was a very heavy sea and a strong northerly blowing, which prevented her from making any headway. She had not been long steering for this place before she struck a sunken rock. She was about eight miles northwest from Point St. George.

In about 10 minutes afterwards her foremast went through her bottom, so as to let her forward end rest on her promenade deck. When this occurred it made a terrible crashing. Shields says the captain and First Officer Allen were using their utmost endeavors on the quarter deck and on all parts of the ship to save the passengers—such as lowering the boats from the davits and helping them to get in them.

As they were lowering away the boat that he was in he saw Captain DeWolf have Mrs. Capt. Wright by the arm, taking her to another boat which was in another part of the ship. When they got a short distance from the ship he saw a boat under the stern, which was swamped, and which had a number of ladies in, beside herself. It was commanded by the second officer. When the boat swamped, the officer was seen to get hold of the ship's side and climb up again. When the boat that he was in had got a mile or so from the *Jonathan*, the latter fired two guns, and he saw her flag hoisted, with the Union down.

As near as they can judge, it was about 45 minutes after she struck until she went down. She slid off the rock, and it was thought, from the soundings made around her, she sank in about 25 fathoms of water. Shields says it was a very rough passage up, and nearly all the passengers were sick in their staterooms at the time of the disaster, but those who were on deck were got into the boats. There were two boats got down beside the one the rescued came ashore in—one containing ladies and the other gentlemen.

There has been a statement afloat in regard to the boat that was saved not being full. I have been informed upon good authority that the boat was as full as she could be loaded, and that the captain said there was enough in her when he lowered the [boat]. Her gunwales, I am told, were not three inches above the water with the load she had. They had a bucket given to them by a gentleman named John Hensley, for bailing the boat as she took in water, but that was not enough, and one of the crew had to take his hat and bail with that to keep her clear. She was the smallest boat on the ship, but a Francis's lifeboat.[2]

The chief engineer, Mr. Mott; the purser, Mr. Benton; and J.A. Lord, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messenger, were seen standing in the purser's room door, when some of those who were saved came aft to get in the boat. Three of the women who were saved, and who were mentioned in the passengers list as being with Mrs. J.C. Keenan, are on board the *Del Norte*, and will return to your city; also the third officer, Mr. Patterson, and all the rest who were saved from the *Jonathan*, together with the life boat which rescued them from a watery grave. There are also three life preservers which they brought ashore with them.

There has been found along the beach, about four miles from this place, at a place called Cushing's Ranch, one of the wooden boats, with the bow and stern knocked out of her, which belonged to the *Jonathan*. The plug hole was stopped up with a *Bulletin* of June 5, 1865.[4] A mattress was also found about five miles to the westward of Redding's Rock, about half way between here and Trinidad, which evidently, judging from the way it was compressed in the middle, had been tightly grasped by some person until life was extinct.

The citizens at this place and all along the beach, as also the soldiers, are very diligent in their search after the bodies; and they have been very kind to those who were saved from the wreck, giving them all clothing and caring for them while they were here. Some of the women did not have time to put anything on themselves or their children, and they came near freezing, as the water kept coming in the boat all the time, and it was very cold.

David Farrell Gives His Account

On August 6, 1865, "special correspondent" J.H.G. of the *Alta California* filed this report from Crescent City, based upon the statement of David Farrell, steerage steward of the ship:[5]

On Saturday, before the wreck, the wind commenced blowing fearfully, and continued until the wreck and after. On Sunday, at 12 o'clock, the captain took the sun and got our posi-

[1] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9,1865.

[2] It is believed that the saved passengers came ashore on a wooden surf boat, not a Francis patent metal lifeboat. Perhaps "but" should read as "not."

[3] It is known that at least two of Mrs. Keenan's employees survived: Miss Martha E. Wilder and Mrs. Martha Stott (who was traveling with her son, who also survived).

[4] The plug hole in the bottom of a lifeboat was usually left open when the boat was in its davits on the main ship; this prevented rainwater from accumulating. Apparently, for this particular boat the plug had been misplaced, and a newspaper was used instead.

[5] Published in the *Alta California*, August 10, 1865.

tion. Finding the storm was likely to continue, he rounded to, with the hope of making Crescent City, where he intended to lay at anchor until the storm abated.

After we rounded to, we ran for Crescent City, I suppose for 30 or 40 minutes, when the ship struck. She struck very hard, apparently about half way between her stem and foremast. She did not appear to strike her stern, but raised on the swell and settled directly upon the rock. The next sea that struck her carried her as far on to the rock as her foremast. Her bottom was badly torn to pieces, and her foremast dropped through until stopped by the yardarm. She remained swinging at the mercy of the waves until she sunk. The officers were very cool, and were doing all in their power to save the lives of the passengers, who were very calm under the circumstances.

When Captain DeWolf found the ship was bound to sink, he walked forward and coolly said; "All hands, aft and try to save yourselves." The first boat that was lowered was the forward boat on the port side, and was swamped; its crew were swimming around her. When we saw her there was one man sitting astride of her, and she was upside down. The next boat that was lowered was on the starboard side of the ship, directly astern of the wheel. This was under the charge of Mr. Campbell, the second mate, and contained a large number of ladies, but was swamped before she was free from the davits; her stern was smashed in against the ship's side. The first officer, Mr. Allen, hauled her passengers on board ship again.

The captain, who was standing on the hurricane deck, just aft of the wheelhouse, spoke to me, and told me to put the plugs into the boat swinging at the starboard davits, just astern of the last that had been swamped. I did so, and he then told me to remain in her, for the purpose of keeping the men out of her, and told me to take as many women as would go. I did so.

John P. Hensley brought two women and tried to get them into the boat, but could not succeed; they begged him to let them go, which he did. Seeing that the two women would not get in, I said "John, you had better get in yourself," but he said he would not, that he would stay and assist others in saving their lives. I then said, "John if you will not go, give me a bucket." He leaped from the hurricane to the upper or pilot deck, and gave me one of the fire buckets that were in a rack on the wheelhouse. I tried again to induce him to come, but he would not, saying that there were already enough in the boat. Mr. Allen then commenced lowering us down.

John Hensley was the last man I spoke to, and his last words to me were, "Keep cool, and save yourselves. Goodbye!" When we struck the water the ship rolled over on us and nearly sunk us, but we escaped with only the loss of all our starboard thole-pins. We had hard work to clear the ship, which we could only do by pushing the boat around under the ship's stern. In this manner we managed to get steerage-way and the use of our oars. We started immediately for shore. We were running quartering with the waves, which broke over us on nearly every crest, at times nearly filling the boat, and had it not been for the bucket that was given us by our brave-hearted shipmate, John Hensley, there would probably never have been a soul saved to give tidings of the terrible disaster.

After we left the ship, there were two guns fired; we looked back at the ship and saw her smokestack go by the board. We then went down into the trough of the sea so far as to make it impossible to see the ship. When we arose on the next crest, I saw the signal of distress flying at the mizzen mast head. We were again let down into the trough of the sea, and when we came up again, the ship had entirely disappeared. I think the waves drove her over the rock, and that she went down stern first.

We were about three hours getting to Crescent City, I should think. The water was very cold, and I think it would not have been possible for a man to have lived more than 10 hours had any tried to save themselves by means of life preservers or drift of any kind where they would have been exposed to the water. The people of Crescent City treated us kindly; and there were three or four boats, including the one in which we were saved, dispatched at once for the wreck, but after getting outside a short distance, they were forced to return, as the seas ran so high as to make it impossible for them to go further.

The officers were all very brave men, and though death staring them in the face, they were cool and sensible.

The Experience of Mrs. Martha Stott

The same correspondent for the *Alta California* also filed this account:[1]

Mrs. Stott, who was on her way to Victoria with her little son, six or seven years of age, was among those who were saved and returned by the *Del Norte*. She says that she had been somewhat sick on Sunday morning and remained upon the hurricane deck, in company with her son and a girl named Elizabeth Wild,[2] who was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan. When the vessel struck she noticed that everything about the deck appeared to be loose and the whole vessel apparently shattered. A moment after planks came up alongside from the steamer's bottom. She got into the small boat as soon as possible with her son and the girl Wild.

Meantime, everything was being done by officers, crew and male passengers to save the ladies. She thinks there were no ladies who came on deck who were not got into the boats. She heard some of the gentlemen passengers say, just before she got into the boat, that they were all right, but an instant after, somebody said that the fires were all out.

Mrs. Gen. Wright came to the side of the boat in which Mrs. Stott was saved, and was going to get in, but Capt. DeWolf, who seemed to think the boat too full already, took hold of her arm and walked with her towards the opposite side of the vessel where they were getting into a larger boat, which was swamped in lowering it into the water. Most of the ladies were below in their rooms, sick and never came upon deck at all. Many of the gentlemen and some of the ladies got hold of life preservers, but they did not prove of the least use. Two young men, with whom Mrs. Stott was talking, had them on, and one of them went below to get one for her. Neither was saved.

The boat which she got into was lowered end first, and came near being swamped in striking the water, but some man on the deck got the fall at the other end of the deck loose, and it went down with a splash, striking, however, right side up. As they went down they noticed a German woman crawling up from the lower deck with her child tied on her back and dragged her into the boat, saving both mother and child.[3]

After they got clear of the vessel Mrs. Stott saw Mrs. Keenan, who had been sick in her berth all the morning, struggling in the water. She was partially dressed and had two life preservers tied on her. One of the women in the boat afterwards said that Mrs. Keenan was hit on the head and stunned by a plank or one of the boats. The boat was loaded down, and the

[1] Published in the *Alta California*, August 10, 1865.

[2] Actually, Martha E. Wilder.

[3] A slightly different version of Mrs. Stott's account was printed in the *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 11, 1865, and also quoted her as saying that Mrs. Keenan "had seven thousand dollars' worth of diamonds with her."

passengers were obliged to bail incessantly with a bucket and the hat of one of the men. She is positive that Yates, the quartermaster, did all in his power to get others into this boat, and says that the reason so many of the crew were saved was, that this being the smallest boat the officers and gentlemen on board considered it less safe than the others, and sent all the ladies into the larger ones, which were lost.

When the boat had got a short distance from the steamer, they saw her plunge suddenly, bow foremost, and disappear instantly. Mrs. Tweedale, an old lady, who had come direct from England, and was on her way to Victoria to join her son, was one of the saved. One body had come ashore at Gold Bluff before the *Del Norte* left. It was much disfigured, naked, and lashed to a piece of the wreck. The description is as follows: Medium height, dark hair, partly gray whiskers, weight 150 to 160 pounds—it had not been recognized.

On the way down, the *Del Norte* ran alongside a piece of the upper works of the liquor saloon; there was nothing upon it. The boat in which the few survivors were saved was brought here on the *Del Norte*.

The Survival of Martha E. Wilder

Miss Wilder, who was either a "fallen angel," or was on her way to Victoria to work in the saloon of John C. Keenan, or was going north to be a nurse—depending upon the account consulted—was among the saved.

A correspondent for the *Alta California* wrote of her experience:[1]

Among those who were saved from the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan* was Martha L. Wilder, a girl of 16 years of age, one of a family of six children with a widowed mother residing on Berry Street. She left this city engaged to go into domestic service as child's nurse, in Victoria.[2] Her life was saved through the heroism of Mr. John Hensley, of the steamer, as she was thrown into the sea by the careening of the vessel and would have been lost but for his gallant conduct—grasping her, as it were, from the jaws of death, and placing her in Mr. Patterson's boat. At Crescent City the ladies provided her with clothing, and she reached this city on the steamer *Del Norte*, the purser of which kindly furnished her with every accommodation, even including money.

On her arrival (being unknown) she waited for some time unnoticed, and on application to the purser, was placed in charge of Joseph [illegible] as the driver of one of Mr. Wm. Taylor's carriages, to be driven home. On arriving at the designated locality, McCall noticed that the appearance of the residence and its inmates did not denote an overabundance of means, yet being an employee he was compelled to collect the regular fare. He was so much impressed with the fact that the family were in absolute want, that he at once communicated the circumstance to his employer, the proprietor of the Cosmopolitan Hotel carriages, who immediately proceeded in person to the house and returned the fare so collected. Mr. Taylor's benevolence did not end here, for he not alone made a suitable donation of his own, but conveyed a person to the place who helped to relieve the pressing wants of the family. The attention of the benevolent is called to the case. We take more than usual pride in calling attention to the disinterested and charitable conduct of Mr. Taylor and his employee, as we well know that many in his same line of business have caused severe reflections to be cast on hackmen [illegible].

A report of Miss Wilder's testimony as printed in *The Sacramento Bee*, August 11, 1865, gives additional details:

Martha E. Wilder, another of the survivors, says that when the ship struck she saw Mr. Belden on deck. He went and got a life preserver and offered it to a young lady standing nearby, who refused to accept it. She says he then came and wanted her to put it on, which she would not do. She was then thrown into the lifeboat and saved. Afterward she saw him standing on the hurricane deck with two life preservers on, and close by stood General Wright, with his wife's arm locked in his, Captain DeWolf, and another gentleman, supposed to be Major Eddy. There they all stood, bravely and calmly, until the waters covered them. It is stated that Mrs. General Wright was put in the boat saved, but afterwards, for some reason, removed on deck again, with the hope, perhaps, that she might be placed in a larger boat.

The Story of Mina Bernhardt

Mina Bernhardt (or Bernhart), another survivor, gave her account to a reporter shortly after she was saved:[3]

I think it must have been about half-past 12 o'clock, as the table was not yet set for 1 o'clock lunch. I was lying in my berth, feeling sick and sad, when I was suddenly startled by a fearful shock, followed by a labored rolling of the ship, a creaking of her timbers and the distinct roar of rushing waters. It was but a moment's movement to spring from my berth and look out of the stateroom window, when I saw a piece of the ship-timber floating in the water, and a man running to the upper deck with a life-preserver on, which convinced me we must be in great danger.

I seized my child with one hand and grasping a life-preserver with the other I ran upon the deck. On the way I met ladies rushing from their rooms in their night-clothes, their hair hanging loosely about them and their faces pallid as death. Owing to the heavy sea, many were sick in their berths when the disaster occurred. When I reached the deck I saw one of the boats already lowered and full of ladies, among whom was Mrs. Gen. Wright. Just then a woman sprang into the boat from the deck, and in the same instant the steamer careened and upset the boat, engulfing all in the merciless wave. One lady clutched her infant with one hand, seized a rope and swung by the ship's side, now borne aloft, then disappearing in the sea as wave rolled on wave towards the wreck; nor did she loosen her grasp till the ship and its living freight went down.

After the boat was upset the captain threw a plank overboard and one lady got on it, but the waves drove it against the ship's side and struck her. When I last saw her she was sinking and pressing her head with one hand. Most of that which is detailed above was seen while sitting in the boat in which I was rescued, and with which I now have to deal. When I first reached the deck the boat above mentioned was already filled with la-

[1] *Alta California*, August 11, 1865.

[2] According to Mrs. Stott's eyewitness testimony in the *Alta California* August 10, 1865, "Miss Wild" was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan.

[3] *San Francisco Bulletin*, August 22, 1865; reprinted in the *Oregonian*, August 30, 1865. • The *San Francisco Chronicle* February 11, 1894, included a truncated version of this account picked up from an account printed in 1865. At the time the *Chronicle* printed a retrospective article on the disaster, this in connection with a current (1894) exploration of the wreck site.

dies, and the life-boat, which was afterward saved, was occupied by the crew. Whether this was selfish, or not, is not for me to decide; but certain it is that they availed themselves of their knowledge of the superiority of this little boat over the larger ones. But, kind reader, whether you would have acted differently can only be decided by the test of similar circumstances.

Seeing the boat fall and ready to be lowered, I called to them, "Save my child!" when one reached out and took it-I at the same time buckling on my life-preserver, because I had no expectation that they would take me, but one of the men said, "Don't you want to come too?" I joyfully accepted the opportunity to go with my child, and was soon dragged over the guards by two of the men. Just then a man with a red jacket on jumped into the boat, one foot lighting upon the China woman's shoulder and the other upon a child, but neither uttered a cry. The Captain at the same time exclaimed, "Stay back! you'll all be drowned!" Here a poor woman all dripping wet ran up from below and rushed for our boat, but the barkeeper, who was standing near, seized her around the waist and held her back, telling her that she would be drowned if she went in that boat.

About this time one of the crew attempted to loosen our boat, and suddenly she hung one end down at a frightful angle, threatening to plunge us all in the waves below, but we clung to the boat, to the seats, to one another, I know not how, till the barkeeper loosened her at the other end, and we were let down. Here danger still threatened us-the rolling steamer to engulf us in her dark whirlpool, the angry waves to dash our frail boat to atoms, and a shoal of drowning people struggling to catch at any hope of rescue, to clutch at our boat and drag it down with them.

The crew hastened to clear the steamer, and as I looked back I noticed one lady standing with her husband and two children on the deck, looking wistfully after us. I had noticed her before as being a very beautiful woman, and shall long remember the expressions of that sweet face. Soon after we left the steamer a huge wave rushed over us, and nearly filled our boat, making us wish ourselves back on the sinking ship. But "Onward!" was the cry; "Whither?" was the question. "There is land!" said one, and we steered in that direction and found it.

Some of the men rowed, while others bailed the water out, while the women crouched in the bottom of the boat, shivering and crying, almost perished with cold. Mr. Patterson even took off his vest and put it on one of the women who seemed more thinly clad than the rest. All honor to him, for he is a brave soul! Under his command the crew worked hard, and as we have seen, successfully; true, most men will work for their lives when they will not work for anything else, but it is possible that, without the guidance of a master spirit, their efforts would have failed. We were so arranged in the boat as to give her an equal balance, and when the women sobbed he assured them by saying, "This is a life-boat, and if any can live in this sea, she can; so don't be afraid."

After we left the steamer, we continued to look back and when borne upon the crest of a wave could see her; then we would plunge down in the trough of the sea and she'd be out of sight; till at last we came up, and she was gone! Mr. Patterson exclaimed: "There! the Brother Jonathan is no more! it is just forty-five minutes since she struck. "

Now we could not look backward to our sinking shipmates, we looked forward to our own rescue; and oh, how anxiously! Who shall measure the horror, dread and suffering that were crowded into these four hours from the steamer to the landing! At last we heard the joyful news that half an hour would take us into Crescent City; but as we neared the land other dangers awaited us. Those frightful breakers rolling against us, and frowning cliffs towering above us, looked danger and dismay to our anxious hearts; and the many-voiced waters dashing on the beach seemed to murmur a low, deep, funeral dirge. But by almost superhuman efforts, and I must not omit to say through the mercies of God, we land and are saved–some of us perhaps for a worse fate! We get out of the boat cold and, chilled, our few rags dripping and clinging to our shivering forms. The first persons seen on the beach were some Indians gaily decked in feathers, and my first thought was, we have mistaken the place and landed among savages–"have been saved from the wreck, (perhaps) to be devoured upon the strand."

But soon the appearance of a broad-faced German reassured me and I felt relieved. This good man was very kind, and rendered us all possible assistance. Our boat had been seen coming in, and now the people hastened to learn the cause of our sudden appearance; and when informed a most intense excitement prevailed. We were, conducted to the hotel, where we were most kindly received, and every possible assistance tendered to us. The ladies set about preparing clothing for us. Even the poorest people in the town hastened to bring their little offerings to our relief. We were nearly naked, and were cold and hungry; but thanks to the generous hearts and diligent hands of Crescent City people, we were soon clothed, warmed and fed. Indeed, I cannot find any expression strong enough to convey the fullness of gratitude my heart feels when I recall the kindness and sympathy manifested by those people towards us. But in their friendly offices to the saved, they failed not to seek the lost; and that same night boats were sent out in hope of picking up some, and Mr. Patterson, notwithstanding the great fatigue of the day, went out that evening to guide the boats to the scene of the wreck.

But after three days' fruitless search, these returned, bringing no tidings of the missing ones, and dashing to atoms the fond hopes that followed them and clung to the possibility that some dear one might be picked up alive. On the second day after the calamity, the Indians reported seeing a crowd of persons on a rock. Again boats were sent out, to find a number of sea lions floundering about upon the rock. I can only add that if there had been more of the passengers and fewer of the crew in that boat, it never would have reached the land, and none would have remained to tell the sad tale.

The Account of Mary Ann Tweedale

The record of first-person accounts and interviews with survivors concludes with the recollection of Mrs. Mary Ann Tweedale, who was known as Mrs. Altrie when she furnished this account years later. Mrs. Tweedale and the earlier-mentioned Mrs. Bernhardt were companions during the voyage:[1]

> I sailed from Liverpool, England, on June 13, 1865, going to New York on my way to join my son, W.C. Tweedale, in Oregon. From there I went to the isthmus and thence on the

[1] This account was printed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* February 11, 1894. By that time she gave her age 74 years (although it should be recalled that nearly 30 years earlier, in 1865, Mrs. Martha Stott called her an "old lady") was known as Mrs. Mary Altrie, and lived in a "neat cottage" in Albany, "a quiet Oregon town. She is not in good health, is sinking gently and in full possession of her faculties to final rest." As she was relating incidents that had happened nearly three decades earlier, her statement is not as reliable as ones given by others immediately after the disaster.

steamer *Constitution* to San Francisco.[1] I left San Francisco July 28, 1865, on the steamer *Brother Jonathan* for Portland. The weather was very rough and many passengers were sick. Two days passed without incident and then, owing to the head winds and a heavy swell, the vessel was unable to make headway.

Captain DeWolf decided to make for Crescent City, which he had just left, and lie there till the storm was over. The vessel put about to the east and was soon nearing the coast. It was Sunday, July 30th, about 1:30 p.m. I was standing on the lower deck talking to a lady who was going to Vancouver to meet her husband. She was telling me how glad she would be to meet him, after a separation of eight months, when there was a frightful crash. The vessel had struck a sunken rock. I was thrown violently under the feet of General Wright's horse, which had been tied in a partly secluded space just off the main deck. There was a scene of wild confusion. I escaped some way from under the horse's feet. When I became fully conscious of what I was doing, I was hanging to the captain's ladder. I climbed it and clung to the cabin window. The ship was laboring dreadfully, and I could scarcely retain my hold. The waves broke over the vessel with terrible force and many people were washed into the sea, among them the woman to whom I had just been talking of the catastrophe. In the uproar of rushing, shouting and praying it was hard to make out anything clearly except the terrible fact that the vessel was lost. Many rushed to the life preservers and began to put them on. I tried to reach them also, but the vessel careened so I could not.

There was a general rush to the boats. Three were lowered and were capsized with their passengers. Not far from where I was clinging, I discovered that a lifeboat was about to be launched. I made a great effort to reach it and succeeded, getting into it with several other women. It seems that the men who were gathered about the boat were from the ship's crew. A Chinese woman was helped in with her child. Her husband asked to get in, but was repulsed. He begged hard, but the sailors drove him [illegible]. His cries were piteous and the parting between husband and wife was enough to wring even the hearts of those whose only emotion was that of self preservation. Third Officer Patterson was in charge of the boat. First Officer [illegible] brought a bucket to bail out the boat with. Patterson asked [illegible] to get in, but he [illegible] 'No, you can [illegible] and God bless you!'

[illegible]

[illegible] We left the ship and [illegible] Then the vessel seemed to give a lurch and get off the rock and come plunging toward our boat. Suddenly she disappeared—about half an hour, I think, after we left her and 40 minutes after she struck.

We reached shore in safety and were kindly cared for by the people, who opened their hearts and homes to us. They also sent out boats and made super-human efforts to save any remaining survivors. The *Del Norte* took us back to San Francisco. I found it difficult to make up my mind to go back to Portland by sea. I almost fainted when getting on the boat, and was only saved from falling overboard by a gentleman catching me.

A Ship That Intended to Pass on the Sea

On that fateful day of the disaster, Sunday, July 30, 1865, Albert D. Richardson and Samuel Bowles, the writers who had been traveling with the Schuyler Colfax party earlier, were returning to San Francisco aboard the *S.S. Sierra Nevada*. Posted fare for passage on the 740-mile voyage on the 223-foot, 1,395-ton coastwise steamer was $45.[2]

This vessel, owned by the Oregon & California Steamship Co., was well known and served under various owners and routes for a long period of years.[3] Among the more interesting incidents in her career was a collision at sea with the *S.S. Golden Gate*, May 3, 1853, when the two steamers were near Cerros Island. During the early 1850s the ship carried much treasure southward from California, including a December 1853 trip with $1,630,000 aboard. Cholera, the bane of travelers to California by land, but also known aboard ship, killed 31 passengers aboard the *Sierra Nevada* on her trip north from Panama to San Francisco in July 1854, and on a September trip the same disease killed 104 of her 650 passengers, plus four more who died after the ship arrived. In 1856-1857 the *Sierra Nevada* was a factor in the ever-changing political intrigue that American soldier of fortune General William Walker stirred up when he took over the government of Nicaragua. In February 1861, after a succession of owners, the ship was sold to the Oregon & California Steamship Company (Holladay and Brenham), under whose direction she was in July 1865.

On July 30, the *S.S. Sierra Nevada* expected to rendezvous at sea with the *Brother Jonathan* and receive from it the latest news from San Francisco. Richardson later recalled:

> [As our southbound ship] threaded St. George's Reef—a series of dangerous rocks near the land; some rising two or three hundred feet, others entirely under water—we hoped to meet the *Brother Jonathan*, with papers from San Francisco only 24 hours [*sic*] old. The swell was very high, and our captain's face wrinkled with anxiety until the perilous point was passed. Meanwhile we were discussing the chances for life one would have, shipwrecked in that heavy sea.
>
> We missed the *Brother Jonathan*, but two hours after we passed the reef she reached it, struck a rock, and in 45 minutes went to the bottom. Of her passengers and crew only 16 were saved. One hundred and fifty, with their human hopes and

[1] The S.S. *Constitution* was in service for the Pacific Mail Steamship Co.
[2] Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi*, 1867, pp. 418-419.
[3] Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 391-392. The ship was built as the *Texas* in 1851 at a cost of about $210,000 by William Collyer, New York. Power was via a *double vertical* beam steam engine with 42" cylinders and a 10' stroke, installed by Morgan Iron Works. The ship was utilitarian and functional, designed to

> fears, their loves and longings and ambitions, were engulfed in that repository which keeps all its treasures and all its secrets till the sea shall give up its dead....
>
> Marine disasters are far more frequent and appalling on our coasts than in any other quarter of the globe.... Our whole system of travel by river and sea is shamefully hazardous. Our best ocean steamers are without boats enough to hold all their passengers, even in smooth waters. And when an inspection is to take place, owners and officers often know it in season to borrow hose, boats, and other needful articles of outfit. The slaughter will never cease till proprietors and managers are held to strict responsibility. Convict and punish them for homicide whenever it occurs through their penuriousness, heedlessness, or neglect of precautions which law and humanity require.

Regarding the same trip on the *S.S. Sierra Nevada*, Richardson's fellow passenger Samuel Bowles mentioned the tempestuosity of the sea only in passing, but lingered on the *Brother Jonathan* and her loss:[1]

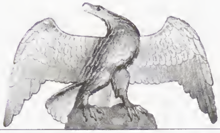
> Ben Holladay's good steamer *Sierra Nevada* brought us down from Victoria in less than three days, and we tried the Pacific Ocean and came in by the Golden Gate for the first time. Though no storm raged, the sea did not prove title to the name [Pacific], but rolled and pitched us altogether unmercifully,.... [We] came to wharf in the generous and land-locked bay of San Francisco with thanksgiving and gratitude, swelling anew and higher to Providence, Captain Conner, and Dr. Murdock, as we learned the sad fate of our alternate steamer, the *Brother Jonathan*, on her passage by us up the route.
>
> We passed her and her fatal rock only an hour or two before their sudden and sad collision; and we readily join, as you can imagine, in the wide tide of feeling that the disaster creates here. The genial old General Wright, long and honorable in service, and beloved throughout the Pacific states, and Mr. Nisbet of the *Bulletin* editorial staff we knew, and had experienced their hospitality. Other prominent and beloved citizens went down in that mysterious, sudden wreck.

The *S.S. Sierra Nevada* remained in coastwise service until October 17, 1869, when she ran onto rocks near San Simeon Bay south of San Francisco. The ship and cargo were pounded to pieces by the surf, but the 42 people aboard all rowed ashore to safety.

carry many people for low cost. Accommodations were provided for 570 steerage passengers. She was intended to run in the Gulf of Mexico between New Orleans and Texas ports, but was sold before completion to J.H. Howard & Sons. Launched on October 25, 1851, the ship entered service for the Howards on the Empire City Line, under the new name of S.S. *Quartz Rock*. On February 7, 1852, under yet another name, the S.S. *Sierra Nevada*, she left New York City for Panama with a complement of passengers (who on the western side were met by the S.S. *New Orleans*, another Empire City Line ship). In October 1852 the vessel was bought by Cornelius Vanderbilt and sent to the Pacific, arriving in San Francisco on March 23, 1853, for service on the Nicaragua to San Francisco run. In July 1853 Vanderbilt transferred her and other steamers of the Independent Line to the Nicaragua Steamship Line, a subsidiary of his Accessory Transit Co.

[1] *Across the Continent*, 1865, p. 215-216.

Chapter Thirteen



Aftermath of the Disaster

In Crescent City

After the 21 or so survivors came ashore late Sunday afternoon, July 30, hope was cherished that it was just a matter of time until others aboard the *Brother Jonathan* would reach shore in safety, either in boats or individually in life preservers. However, the hours passed, then days, and no one else was found alive.

A citizen saw the survivors arrive:[1]

> Ben West, owner of Ben West's Saloon, watched through his telescope with only mild interest as the lifeboat came ashore. He wondered why such a small boat was so crowded, with one man dangling his feet in the water as he straddled the bow.

Crescent City residents jumped into action. An observer noted:[2]

> Four boats put off from this place immediately, to try and save any persons who might be floating alive. Two of them returned just at dark, having seen nothing. Two are still out. Boats will start in the morning before light to find any who may possible be alive, but our hopes are small. It will probably be smooth in the morning. It was so very rough this evening that it would have been scarcely possible to see anyone unless close at hand.

A lady who was in Crescent City at the time recalled this:[3]

> All that Sunday afternoon boats put out from the town to the scene of the wreck, but no living were found. Bonfires were kept burning for a week on the beaches from Cushing House to Point St. George.
>
> One day great excitement was caused by the report brought by Indians that there were a lot of people on the Seal Rocks. A boat was provisioned and rowed the 12 miles to the rock, only to find a swarm of sea lions.

This account was printed later in a retrospective by a reporter for the *Del Norte Record*, who was on the scene as survivors came ashore:[4]

> Sunday, about five o'clock, p.m., a small boat was seen approaching our harbor and landing on the beach.... It was soon learned that the steamer *Brother Jonathan* had struck a rock and gone down some 10 or 12 miles from Crescent City, and that all except this boat load were supposed to have perished.
>
> Immediately a boat was manned by Capt. Benj. West and started for the scene of the disaster, but no vestige of the wreck nor any human being could be found. The greatest excitement prevailed about town. Men, women and children flocked to the beach above town and as darkness approached, fires were built along the coast to guide any of the passengers that might yet survive, but no vestige of any could be discovered. From the mate, Patterson, we learned all the particulars of the disaster.
>
> The vessel was from San Francisco bound for Victoria, and had on board about 250 passengers. The wind was blowing a gale and when rounding Point St. George no headway could be made, and it was thought best to come into this harbor and lay until night, when the wind would die down and the vessel would then proceed on her way up the coast. She turned to do so, after which Patterson went below for a rest. In a short time he heard a crash, and rushing on deck found everything in confusion. The yards of the foremast were lying across the deck, which gave evidence that the mast had gone through the bottom of the vessel. Women were screaming, and men were launching the boats, which were soon filled to overflowing, and one after another was swamped, and the water was filled with human beings, struggling against hope to save their lives. There was soon but one boat left, the captain's life boat, which was seized by Mate Patterson, and some of the crew, and which

[1] Don Marshall, *Oregon Shipwrecks*, 1984, p. 10.

[2] Dispatch from the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*'s correspondent in Crescent City, dated July 30 and published later.

[3] Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*. Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, September 1959, Vol. 60, p. 346, the account being that of Mrs. Laura A. Shipman, later preserved by Mrs. A. F. Van Deventer of Fort Dick, CA.

[4] *Del Norte Record*, August 9, 1890; additional information from this article appears in Chapter 14.

was successfully launched, filled and pushed off from the vessel and started down the coast.

Two or three guns were fired from the vessel, which we with many others in Crescent City heard, but as the wind was blowing a gale, and many dead trees stood in the half cleared woods between the town and the upper beach it was thought to be the falling of trees, not thinking at the time that such a disaster happened so near.... It was never known exactly what time the vessel struck, but it must have been about 2 p.m. and went down in about a half hour, as all the watches taken from the bodies stopped between a quarter to three and three o'clock....

Captain Thomas Buckley, commandant of the 6th Infantry, California Volunteers, at nearby Camp Lincoln, telegraphed this notice the next day (excerpt):[1]

> No trace of the vessel is left. I was out last night on the beach with 14 men; shall keep a party out on the beach. General Wright, family and staff are supposed to be lost. Full particulars by mail.

Anthony J. Bledsoe, who later compiled a history of Del Norte County, furnished this account of activities in Crescent City, beginning the day after the wreck:[2]

> Early on the following morning, two boats, under command of Benj. West and Anson Burr, started out to make another effort to save life. But their efforts were all in vain. Nothing was visible in the shape of wreckage or human bodies.
>
> On the same evening, a boat manned by the third mate of the *Brother Jonathan*, Charles Brown, Charles Patterson, and [first name not known] Brown started to Eureka to obtain assistance, but returned before reaching that place. They reported that on their way back they saw portions of the hurricane deck of the steamer drifting by, together with beds, trunks, etc. They saw no bodies.
>
> The boat which had swamped on being launched from the steamer drifted ashore on the beach opposite Crescent City, and a portion of the upper work of the vessel was afterwards found near Point St. George. The heel of her fore mast, 20 or 30 feet long, also went ashore near the same place.
>
> A boat went up with two of the crew to within a short distance of Seal Rock, and when they returned they reported that they had seen people on the rock. Other boats were immediately manned and went up to the rock, but on arriving there discovered that the objects supposed to be men were only sea lions.
>
> A few days afterward a boatload went up and tried to discover the place where the steamer went down. The quartermaster [Jacob Yates] pointed out a rock, a small part of which is visible at low tide, as the one on which she struck. The rock was not on the charts and had never been known before. It was supposed to be a part of the St. George Reef, and was named "Brother Jonathan Rock."
>
> Nine or 10 days after the wreck, the bodies of the victims began to come ashore. Every day three or four bodies would be picked up at sea by the boatmen, and many were washed up on the beach in the vicinity of Crescent City. Horrible discoveries were made in caves and among the rocks. Dead faces showed white from tangled seaweed; wild eyes stared up from shallow pools left by receding tides.
>
> As fast as they were secured, the bodies were taken to Dugan & Wall's warehouse, and an inquest was there held by J.E. Eldridge, coroner. Forty-five bodies were recovered in the vicinity of Crescent City, and many others were found at different points on the coast between Humboldt Bay and the mouth of the Rogue River. The bodies recovered here were buried in the Crescent City cemetery. A number of them were afterwards removed by relatives and friends and taken to other places....

Soldier Curtis on the Scene

On Sunday, July 30, Greenleaf Curtis, a soldier at Camp Lincoln near Crescent City, added this to his diary:[3]

> *Brother Jonathan*, having a head heat sea, not making much headway, concluded when off Point St. George to return to Crescent City and wait until it blew less hard. A short distance south of Seal Rock the ship struck a sunken rock, and at the second pointed [*sic*]. The foremast went down till the foreyard lay across the deck.
>
> One boat was filled with women and covered, but filled and capsized alongside. Another stoved under the wheelhouse. The third smallest boat in the ship under the command of the third mate, Mr. Patterson, succeeded in reaching Crescent City with only two oars—a distance of 10 or 12 miles. Those saved in the boat were as follows: four sailors, Negroes; Sevener, a comedian; two firemen, Irish; the baker, a Dutchman; and two waiters. Total 11. Those belonging to the ship passengers were: one English woman and a boy of five, two Dutch women and one had a child, one girl of 14 and one Chinawoman and child. Total eight. Grand total 19. The mate said that there were about 300 passengers and crew aboard. General Wright and four staff were aboard.
>
> The boats went out from Crescent City as far as they could get, but could not see anything. The ship surged over the rock and sunk in about half an hour. The ship struck a very few minutes after 2:00 p.m. It was fair weather but blowing a heavy n.wester.

On July 31 Curtis added this:

> Boats went out but nothing heard from the wreck.

And this on August 1:

> One of the Kanakas was out in the ship's boat with some Indians and said that they saw men on Seal Rock, but was so

[1] *Alta California*, August 2, 1865. A description of Camp Lincoln can be found in Fred B. Rogers, "Early Military Posts of Del Norte County," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, March 1947, pp. 1 ff. Earlier situated in another location, Camp Lincoln was moved in mid-September 1862 to a site "about six miles northeast of Crescent City near the junction of the Smith River Road and the Jacksonville Turnpike. This move resulted from a request by Superintendent [of Indian Affairs George M.] Hanson to General [George] Wright that the troops be moved from the position 'almost in the midst of the Indians' to a site at or near Fort Dick to 'serve as protection both to the whites and Indians, who will thereby be kept entirely separate.'" As has been related earlier in the present text, at one time (1863-1864) Gen. Wright advocated the removal of Indians from northern California and placing them on a reservation on Santa Catalina Island. Camp Lincoln was used by the military until the summer of 1869 and was formally abandoned in May 1870.

[2] *History of Del Norte County, California, with a Business Directory and Traveler's Guide*, pp. 81-82.

[3] Esther Ruth Smith, *The History of Del Norte County California*, 1953, pp. 66-67. • Greenleaf Curtis was born in Blue Hill, Maine, and enlisted in the Union Army at Angel's Camp, California in 1861. Discharged later, he settled in Crescent City, married, and eventually died there 14 July, 1920 at the age of 84 (cf. DSR, "1997 Field Investigations" draft).

rough they could not get to them. Three boats started, and I went in one of them. Left a little after 3:00 p.m. Pulled off against a heavy sea and strong wind. Found they were nothing but sea lions. Started to return just at sunset, the wind suddenly stopped—sound dead ahead and we did not get back until 1:00 a.m. Thoroughly wet through for the boat shipped a good deal of water. Went to bed without any supper.

Followed by this on August 2:

Very lame, hands blistered—completely done up.

News Reaches the Cities (published August 2)

On August 1, after hearing the news and talking with Third Officer James Patterson, Emory Wing, stationed at Camp Lincoln not far from Crescent City, mailed this letter to the *Weekly Union Record,* where it subsequently reached print.[1] As Patterson was the only one of the ship's officers to survive, it may be that his estimate of passengers and crew is more accurate than other accounts. His "full load of freight" may have applied to storage *volume* capacity, not to weight:

Camp Lincoln, August 1, 1865.

Everybody about this camp complains of being ill. Our flag has been at half-mast yesterday and today for the loss of the steamship *Brother Jonathan,* which was wrecked off the coast near here.

I learned by the third mate, Mr. Patterson, that the vessel left San Francisco on Friday; 28th of July, bound for Portland and Victoria, with 250 passengers and 50 crew, and a full load of freight—Captain DeWolf in command.

They had fair weather all Friday, but on Saturday it began to blow from the north-west, increasing to a gale by night, blowing hard all night. On Sunday morning the vessel changed her course in order to get out of the heavy sea by making close along the coast, but on sighting land and not getting out of the heavy sea, the ship working very bad, being loaded heavy forward, changed her course to make Crescent City; had a fair view of Seal Rock and the Two Sisters on the weather bow, about four miles; had hardly got on her new course when she struck on a sunken rock, knocking the whole keel off of her. She struck just forward of the foremast. The swell of the sea raising her bow clear of the rock and then setting dead down. The next sea lifted her forward and set her down midships, the foremast dropping down until the foreyard rested on deck, the vessel rolling heavily from side to side.

At this time two guns were fired in quick succession, and the boat that came shore cleared the ship. The next sea carried her clear over the rock, her bow going down. The last that was seen of the vessel was her stern, standing straight up in the air. In 20 minutes after striking everything had gone to eternity. Of all that living load of freight only 19 persons were saved. Mr. Patterson, third mate; four fire men, four sailors, steerage steward, two men, four ladies and three children passengers came off in the only boat that was saved.

The port quarter boat was lowered away with about 30 ladies only to hurry them into eternity a little faster—the boat upsetting almost as quick as touching the water. Another boat was swamped under the guards, when everybody seemed to become paralyzed and quit trying to save themselves. Captain DeWolf walked his quarter deck to the last, as cool as if just going to a safe harbor, instead of that port whence none return. General Wright, staff and family were on board, Mrs. Lee, and two camels for Lee's Circus. Mr. J. Lord, of Crescent City, was on board. He leaves a wife at that place. When the ship turned to come to this port he procured a box of peaches to present to his wife; but how soon after he found a watery grave.

Mr. Lord and General Wright were on the quarterdeck with the captain when she went down. Boats have been out from Crescent City, ever since, and people have patrolled the beach for miles up and down, but up to 5 o'clock p.m., nothing, not even a stick of the ill-fated ship has been seen. Fires have been kept burning after night and guns fired every hour as signals to those that were out of sight of land.

Captain Buckley sent an express to Jacksonville yesterday noon, so you will have heard of the disaster before this reaches you. Most of the passengers were in their berths, more or less seasick. One lady that was saved had about as much clothing as mother Eve before her fall. One of the sailors gave her a pair of pants and a jacket. The survivors were well provided for by the citizens of Crescent City, and everything was done that possibly could be to relieve any and every want they could express. It is late and I must close.

Very respectfully yours,

EMORY WING.

P.S. August 2d—The Indians came into Crescent City late last night and report seeing three men on Seal Rock. Boats have gone out to the rescue, but had not returned up to three o'clock, p.m.

E.W.

News of the loss was written by Capt. Thomas Buckley on July 31, but did not reach the outside world until the next day when a soldier from Fort Lincoln, north of Crescent City, rode over the mountainous terrain to Jacksonville, Oregon, to relay the news, arriving there on Monday evening (August 1). The dispatch dated the same day was printed in Sacramento and San Francisco on August 2.

In the Sacramento newspaper the sensational account of the ship's loss concluded with this information concerning the sending of information (as printed in the *Daily Bee,* August 2):[2]

As soon as it was ascertained that General Wright was aboard, Buckley (commanding this camp) prepared a dispatch immediately for Headquarters Department Pacific, and sent one of his men with all possible speed to Jacksonville, Oregon, the nearest telegraph station.

Our camp wears a mournful appearance at present. The flag floats at half and every building is hung with drapery. An order from Washington reached here but a few days ago announcing, officially, the death of Lincoln, and ordering all military posts to pay due respect to the late president's memory. Our captain, who is full of genuine patriotism and heroic devotion to our country and her rulers, had the order put into immediate effect, although we have long mourned Lincoln.[3]

[1] *Weekly Union Record,* Oroville, Butte County, August 12, 1865, "Brother Jonathan."

[2] The *Bee* reprinted the dispatch from Camp Lincoln, CA, August 1. Detailed account signed "Nemo" told of the disaster, the loss of lives, and sketchy information about the number who had survived.

[3] Lincoln had been killed at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., on April 15, 1865, and news of this had been disseminated throughout the West Coast in May. However, it seems that the "official" news arrived in July. The reference to Captain Buckley's patriotism may reflect the situation that so

Jacksonville, Oregon, as depicted in a circa 1856 engraving. In 1865 Jacksonville had a telegraph link with major cities, and from this town news of the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy was dispatched. (Lithograph by Britton & Rey, San Francisco; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art specimen as reproduced by John W. Reps, *Panoramas of Promise*)

This was included in an account published in San Francisco on August 2, prefacing a story under the title of "Wreck of the 'Brother Jonathan', Loss of Nearly All the Passengers...."[1]

> [By State Telegraph] Jacksonville, Oregon, August 1st, 10 p.m.:
>
> A soldier arrived this evening from Camp Lincoln bringing a dispatch to Colonel [R.C.] Drum. He reports the *Brother Jonathan*, with Gen. Wright, staff and family, and between two and three hundred passengers, lost near Camp Lincoln on July 30th, except 14 men and one woman, who were saved. No particulars yet....
>
> Camp Lincoln, (via Jacksonville, Oregon,) July 31st, 1865—(Received at San Francisco, August 1st, 1865, at 10 p.m.)
>
> To Col. R.C. Drum.—At 2 p.m. yesterday, the steamer *Brother Jonathan* struck a sunken rock, and sunk in less than an hour, with all on board, except 16 persons, who escaped in a small boat, the only survivors of the ill fated ship. No trace of the vessel is left. I was out last night on the beach with 14 men; shall keep a party out on the beach. General Wright, family and staff are supposed to be lost. Full particulars by mail. Thos. Buckley, Capt. 6th Infantry, C.V., Commanding.
>
> Passenger List
>
> The following is the list of passengers, as obtained from the office of the California Steam Navigation Company. It will be seen that Brig. Gen. Wright and wife, Dr. Ingram, U.S.A., Capt. Chaddock, U.S.R.S., Lieut. J. B. Waite and Governor Henry of Washington Territory, were among those on board. Who are saved, it is impossible to state at present.. .

On the same day, August 2, the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* printed news under the title, "Terrible Marine Disaster, Wreck of the Brother Jonathan," noting in part:

> The brief telegram in the morning papers announcing the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan* and the loss of nearly all on board, cast a gloom over the community and created the most intense anxiety among those of our citizens having relations or friends on board. The meager and unsatisfactory character of the dispatch, while it increased the public anxiety, at the same time, from its entire lack of details, afforded grounds for hope that the general fact may have been exaggerated and that the loss of life will not turn out to be so great as reported.
>
> Unless there was a very heavy sea at the scene of the disaster, it seems hardly possible that only 16 persons out of 163 passengers and crew, should have been saved—especially as the wreck is reported to have occurred at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the passengers had an hour in which to save themselves after being notified of their danger....
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* was provided with three large surf boats and three of Francis's patent lifeboats, so that it is not improbable that more of the passengers have been saved than we know of now. The coast in the vicinity of the accident is exceedingly rocky, and the feat of landing in a boat a dangerous one at any time. It is not unlikely that one or more boats from the steamer might have put off from the shore with the hope of reaching Crescent City, which is only about 10 miles distant, in which case we should not have received tidings from them as soon as from the others who landed in the vicinity of the wreck....
>
> Her crew, including officers, consisted of 54 men. The number of passengers on board, including children was 109; at least this is the number registered at the Company's Office in this city, but it usually happens that several passengers go on board at the last moment, and their names are not registered at the office....
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* carried a valuable cargo, on which there were insurances in San Francisco offices as follows:
>
> California Insurance Company $20,000.[2]
>
> California Lloyd's 13,690.[3]

the district of California near the Oregon border and in Oregon itself, loyalties were divided during the Civil War, and there was much pro-Confederacy sentiment.

[1] *Alta California*, August 2, 1865.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5 listing: Capital $300,000; president, Benjamin F. Lowe; secretary, John G. Parker, Jr.; office at 224 California Street.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5 listing: Office at 414 Montgom-

CALIFORNIA LLOYDS.

MARINE INSURANCE.

OFFICE, 418 CALIFORNIA ST.

The Insurers underwriting at the California Lloyds issue

MARINE INSURANCE POLICIES

AGAINST ALL RISKS, ON LIBERAL TERMS.

LOSSES PAYABLE IN UNITED STATES GOLD COIN,

—AND—

PROMPTLY ADJUSTED.

JOHN PARROTT, of Parrott & Co., Bankers.
GEO. C. JOHNSON, of Geo. C. Johnson & Co., Importers.
N. LUNING, of N. Luning & Co., Bankers.
JAMES PHELAN, Capitalist and Importer.
LAFAYETTE MAYNARD, Capitalist.
J. A. DONOHOE, of Donohoe, Kelly & Co., Bankers.
C. L. LOW, Capitalist.
WM. E. BARRON, of Barron & Co., Bankers.
JAMES OTIS, of Macondray & Co., Merchants.
J. MORA MOSS, Capitalist.
J. G. KITTLE, of DeWitt, Kittle & Co., Importers.
THOS. H. SELBY, of Thos. H. Selby & Co., Importers.
J. Y. HALLOCK, of J. Y. Hallock & Co., Importers.

GVE. TOUCHARD,
Secretary.

MERCHANTS'

MUTUAL MARINE

INSURANCE COMPANY,

OF

San Francisco.

ORGANIZED, - - - - - - - - - APRIL 2, 1863.

OFFICE:

NORTH-EAST CORNER OF FRONT AND CALIFORNIA STREETS,

SAN FRANCISCO.

CAPITAL, - - - - - - - $500,000.

LOSSES PAID PROMPTLY IN U. S. GOLD COIN.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

JAMES P. FLINT,	GEO. W. PRESCOTT,	W. J. ADAMS,
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JAMES P. FLINT, President.
C. L. TAYLOR, Vice-President.

J. B. SCOTCHLER, Secretary.

Insure HULLS, CARGO, FREIGHT and SPECIE to and from all parts of the World.

California Lloyd's and Merchants' Mutual Marine Insurance Co. of San Francisco were two of the insurers whose clients lost cargo aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. In keeping with practice at the time, both advertised that losses would be paid in U.S. gold coin. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

Merchants' Mutual Marine Insurance Co. of San Francisco. 10,000.[1]

Bigelow & Brother. 2,500.[2]

Falkner, Bell & Co. 2,300.[3]

•

Total $48,490

Probably two-thirds of the cargo was uninsured.

For many days the *Alta California* and the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* ran nearly parallel accounts, with subsequent stories often repeating the news of earlier days. Other notices were published in Sacramento, Portland, and elsewhere.

In Portland many people awaiting the arrival of the ship that never came read this in the *Oregonian*, August 2:

The *Brother Jonathan.*

We publish this morning a telegram received late last evening from Jacksonville, Oregon, to the effect that the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, with nearly all on board, was lost near Crescent City on Sunday last. From the tenor of the dispatch we have every reason to fear that the announcement is true. Gen. Wright and staff were on board, The commandant at Camp Lincoln wishing to notify Gen. Drum of San Francisco of the calamity, sent a soldier to Jacksonville with a dispatch, a brief report of which has also been sent here. As to cause of this appalling calamity we can only give our own conjecture. Various surmises suggest themselves, but the most probable one is that the steamer's collision with the *Falkenburg*, on her last downward trip, was of a more serious character than had been supposed, and that having started back without sufficient repairs, she sunk suddenly by reason of the damages received in the manner spoken of.

Or is it possible that she may have run upon some hidden rock off Crescent City, and in this way been lost? But whatever may be conjectured about the cause of the calamity, the account comes too direct to permit us to doubt its occurrence. We do not know who of our citizens may have been on board the ill-starred vessel, but certain it is that this terrible disaster will carry mourning into many hearts here and elsewhere.

ery Street, the firm was based in [illegible], England.

[1] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5 listing: Capital $500,000; president James P. Flint; secretary J. B. Scotchler; office at the corner of California and Front Streets.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5 listing: Henry H. and George [illegible] Bigelow, fire, life and marine insurance agents; office in [illegible] Building, 505 Montgomery Street. Both [illegible] lived at [illegible] Pine Street.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5 listing: James Falkner and Henry D. Harrison, commission merchants, agents for Lloyd's insurance; office at 430 California Street.

The Second Day of News Accounts (August 3)

By the next day, August 3, more information was on hand. The topic was the talk of San Francisco, and the papers devoted a generous amount of space to record some facts (which seemed to be scarce) and express many opinions and theories.

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* account included these items:

> The wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* continued to be the all absorbing topic among our citizens, and a general gloom pervades the community. The flags throughout the city are displayed at half mast, and all hearts are touched with profound grief at the terrible calamity. The few additional details of the catastrophe that have come to hand unhappily but confirm the terrible announcement contained in the first dispatch, and leave scarcely any grounds of hope for those who had relatives or friends on board the ill-fated steamer. It is now four days since the wreck occurred, and no tidings have reached us of the safety of any of the passengers with one exception, whose names appeared in the printed list, and the only officer of the steamer–James Patterson–who reached the shore with a boatload of the crew, appends as the last words of his dispatch from the scene of the calamity, "we have given up all hopes."
>
> How it should have happened that the only boat which reached the shore should be less than half filled, and with none of the ship's passengers, may require explanation hereafter, when the facts and circumstances attending the disaster are more fully known. We are informed by a gentleman who has been traveling on the line constantly for the last six months that the officers of the *Brother Jonathan* were, without exception, first class men, who would be likely to do their duty in any and every emergency, but that the crew were a shiftless, vagabond set, composed in great part of Kanakas, who could not be relied on.
>
> The following are the latest dispatches receiving to the hour of writing.
>
> Crescent City, July 30th, via Jacksonville, Oregon (Received in San Francisco, August 2d.)
>
> "California Steam Navigation Company's Steamer *Brother Jonathan* struck a sunken rock off St. George's Point, eight or 10 miles northwest from Crescent City, about half past 1 o'clock p.m., today, and went down about 45 minutes afterwards, and all on board are supposed to be lost, except 17 adults and 3 children, who came ashore with me in the ship's lifeboat at this place about 4 o'clock p.m. All the small boats at this place have gone to the rescue; no hopes of saving anyone. Two boats swamped alongside of the ship, and there were three boats left on the steamer. Passengers cared for by the citizens here.
>
> 8 o'clock. Boats returned, and nothing seen of the wreck. We have given up all hopes."–James Patterson, Third Officer
>
> List Of The Saved:
>
> James Patterson, third officer
> David Farrell, steerage steward
> Henry Miller, baker
> Patrick Linn, fireman
> William Lowry, fireman
> William E. Shield, waiter
> Mrs. Mary Ann Tweedale
> Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and child
> Miss Martha E. Wilder
> Mrs. Martha Stott and child
> And four colored seamen

The *Bulletin* went on to quote items datelined *Press Despatch*, Jacksonville, Oregon, August 2, at 7 p.m.:

> The last seen of Gen. Wright he was standing on board holding a life preserver in his hand. There were two boats swamped before the one that the 14 men and the women and children made their escape in left. Capt. Buckley had men out patrolling the beach all night and the next day, so as to pick up any bodies that might drift ashore, but there was no drift of the ship, nor did any wash ashore up to 5 o'clock on the 31st ult. The boat fired two guns, but it was thought that that it was only a signal from some boat on her way up. There was nothing known of the wreck until it was revealed by those who made their escape in the small boat....
>
> The steamer was wrecked by running a sunken rock off Point Lincoln,[1] near Crescent City. The reader will notice a discrepancy between the statements in both dispatches and the list of names given in Petterson's [Patterson's] dispatch. According to the "list" there were 11 men, 4 women and 2 children in boat that came ashore, while one dispatch states that there were "17 adults and 3 children," and the other that there were 14 men, a woman and a child.
>
> None of the names of these four women is to be found registered at the office of the company in this city, and the explanation given is that they probably belonged to the party of seven women printed on the lists as an appendage to the name of Mrs. John C. Keenan. Mrs. Keenan was the keeper of a lager beer saloon at Victoria, and the seven women under her charge were on their way thither as waiting girls. We are informed that there were probably about 25 passengers on board the steamer, and whose names were not registered at the office here, and therefore not entered in the list printed yesterday. These, together with the 111 contained in the printed list, would make in the neighborhood of 140 passengers. The crew members numbered 54–thus making the total number of souls on board about 200.

On the same day, August 3, the *Alta California* printed accounts including this:

> Since our first account of the loss of the *Brother Jonathan* was received, we have obtained the following facts which will be of interest to the public, in lack of direct intelligence from the scene of the wreck.
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* had six boats on board, three of which were Francis' Patent Life Boats, and the others common ship's surf boats, of capacity [total, all six boats] to carry 250 people, which is more than the whole number on board. Capt. Connor, of the *Sierra Nevada*, who arrived from the North on Monday, reports that he passed the reported scene of the wreck, at 11 a.m., on Sunday, and expected to meet the *Brother Jonathan* near that point, to exchange papers, but saw nothing of her. There was a strong wind and heavy sea at the time. He thinks that she foundered about 25 miles to the north of Crescent City. There are two places a few miles apart in the vicinity at which boats could land, and he thinks it possible

[1]Another name for St. George's Point. The *San Francisco Call*, March 29, 1891, included this item as part of a retrospective account: "The steamship *Brother Jonathan*, Captain S.J. DeWolf, left this port at 10 o'clock on the morning of July 28, 1865, for Portland, and about 1:30 o'clock on the afternoon of the 30th struck a sunken rock off St. George's Point (also called Point Lincoln), some eight or ten miles northwest from Crescent City, Del Norte County, Cal."

that some of the passengers may have landed in the other boats at a point eight miles from Chetco Harbor, where those reported saved came ashore.

Captain Jackson, of the *Del Norte*, thinks the *Brother Jonathan* may have foundered at a point 10 miles above Crescent City, in which case some of the boats may have run down to that point. It is to be regretted, in view of the ravages of the pirate *Shenandoah*, and this great public calamity, that not a government vessel of any description is now here, except the Revenue Cutter *Joe Lane*, either to protect our commerce or render assistance in recovering the bodies of the victims of the disaster and ascertaining whether any not yet reported have survived.[1] [Here was inserted a list of crew members.]

Mr. Nisbet, of the *Evening Bulletin*, was on a trip to Oregon, Washington Territory and British Columbia, and started with the intention of being absent four or five weeks. He was unmarried, and leaves no relatives in this country.[2] Victor Smith, formerly collector at Port Angeles, Puget Sound, was wrecked on the *Golden Rule*, on Roncador Reef, last month, and the illness which he contracted from exposure at that time was the cause of his remaining here when the lost steamer sailed.[3] James R. Richards was a member of the well-known Front Street firm of Richards & McCraken. He was on his way to Victoria to meet his wife, who was en route from Honolulu to Victoria, on one of the vessels belonging to the firm. He leaves several children here. J.S. Geddes was of the firm of Bosworth & Geddes, another prominent Front Street firm. Major Eddy was going north as paymaster at Fort Vancouver, at his own request, in place of Major Fay, first designated for the post.

Joseph A. Lord, brother of Charles Lord, of the firm of Nudd, Lord & Co., supposed to have been lost in the *Brother Jonathan*, was 36 years of age, and a native of Woodstock, Vermont; leaves a wife and one child. He has been an express messenger for Messrs. Wells, Fargo & Co., on the northern coast, since 1858, and was one of the most faithful, capable and amiable of men, unflinching in the discharge of his duties, kind and courteous to all.

The *Sierra Nevada*, which arrived here on Monday, passed Crescent City at noon on Sunday, two hours before the *Jonathan* was wrecked, and must have passed the latter 10 or 15 miles south of Crescent City.[4] Although the two boats could not have been very far apart—the route in running both up and down the coast being near the shore—the *Sierra Nevada* did not see the *Jonathan*. The sea was covered with a light fog, through which a ship might have been seen at a distance of four or five miles, looking seawards—or perhaps two miles landwards, the fog being heavier near the shore. There was a stiff breeze from the west, and a heavy swell, but nothing to prevent the escape of all the passengers in the boats if these could have been launched. It is supposed by sailors that the steamer ran upon a sunken rock, and then rapidly filling, careened over, slid off, sinking within a few minutes and before the boats could get loose. Five or 10 minutes would be required to get the boats clear.

Captain DeWolf was an experienced seaman, familiar with all the duties of his office, and with all the features of the coast. He was a very quiet, reserved man, strictly attentive to his duties, and, if we are rightly informed, he never tasted intoxicating drinks.[5] He has been regarded as highly trustworthy in every respect....

According to the official record in the office of C.C. Benis, Inspector of Boilers, the steamship *Brother Jonathan* [had on board] 3 fire pumps, 450 feet of hose, 51 buckets, 10 axes, 4 iron lifeboats, 2 surf boats, and 397 cork jacket life preservers.[6] Each boat would comfortably accommodate 40 persons, giving room in all for 240 persons, or, in case of great need, 250. Each life preserver would sustain one person, and all were placed in the staterooms [*sic*] within reach of the passengers.

It is seen that by this time there were still no first-hand accounts received by the *Alta California* office from anyone surviving the wreck. It is also evident that there was enough safety equipment aboard to take care of everyone, certain contemporary as well later stories notwithstanding.

In the *Oregonian* this was printed:

> The Lost Steamer: ...We are told that only 17 persons escaped from the fated vessel yet with a hope which is natural to the human heart, we put our imaginations to the task of devising ways in which we suppose others might have escaped.... From the statement given in the published report of the third officer of the ship, it is now certain that the vessel struck a hidden rock and went suddenly down.
>
> Of the rocks off Point St. George, the superintendent of the Coast Survey of 1862 remarks: "Every one trading here knows that vessels should be very cautious of venturing out of the beaten track. The rocks are of a peculiar character, standing isolated like bayonets, with their points just below the surface." The same report, in another place, says: "A reef extends W.N.W. from Point St. George for a distance of six miles. There are 10 or 12 outlying rocks and many sunken ones, with a passage running between them close to shore."
>
> Accordingly it will be seen that unless a vessel stands well out to sea, there is great danger in passing this reefy point....

The *Oregonian* of August 3 continued with another article:

> **The Appalling Calamity.**
>
> Business was early suspended in some parts of the city yesterday, on account of the terrible calamity and loss of life on Sunday off Crescent City, by the sinking of the steamship *Brother Jonathan*. Flags all over the city, and on every craft in port, were displayed at half mast, in respect of General Wright and others prominently known among us, who were lost....

[1] Namesake of the ship was Senator Joseph Lane, of Oregon, who in 1860 was the candidate for vice president on the ticket with John C. Breckinridge for president. Both men were selected by dissidents from the Democratic Party who were denied admission to the regular Democratic convention (held in Baltimore on June 18, 1860).

[2] Per contra, the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August [illegible], 1865 stated that in Nisbet's will he mentioned a brother working for the Pacific Railroad in Clipper Gap, California.

[3] The intended comment was that Victor Smith, being ill, remained in San Francisco while his wife and children took a steamer north. Subsequently, Smith went north separately aboard the *Brother Jonathan*.

[4] The captain of the *Sierra Nevada* was not aware that the *Brother Jonathan* had put into the port of Crescent City the previous night, and on Sunday was not coming north from San Francisco. The contemporaneous accounts of Richardson and Bowles, aboard the *Sierra Nevada*, were published in book form long after the tragedy occurred. Thus, both authors had more facts than were printed in San Francisco newspapers during the first several days of August 1865.

[5] The temperance movement was a prominent social cause at the time, and often descriptions of a person's character gave prominent mention to abstinence from alcohol, if that was the case.

[6] During this era life jackets were of two basic types: cork and hollow tin compartments, the latter subject to corrosion and leakage.

Quite a number of our citizens are thought to have been on board, who were in San Francisco lately, and expected to be on their return. Dr. Henry of Washington Territory, and a family named Lukey [Luckey], supposed to belong near Eugene City, arrived from the East on the 25th by the steamship *Constitution*, and it is thought they were on the *Brother Jonathan*.

Col. Wm. Logan and family of The Dalles, and Mr. Richards of San Francisco, were also on board. The most affecting scenes occurred in the city on the reception of the news, among those who had relatives or friends on the vessel, and the telegraph office was crowded with people eager to hear all that was possible concerning the wreck.... Mr. McCraken, Mr. Arrigoni, and possibly others, design leaving by stage this morning hoping to reach the scene of the disaster, and render assistance....

The Third Day of News Accounts (August 4)

Each day brought a recapitulation of what had been stated before, with new information added. Then, as now, the public had an insatiable appetite for news of unfortunate events. By August 4 the facts were still sketchy at best.

The *Alta California* told of a search party:

GOING IN SEARCH OF THE DEAD: The steamship *Del Norte* leaves for the north today, carrying a number of the friends of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* disaster, who go to the scene of the wreck in the hope of being able to recover the remains of those so dear to them in life.

Among the passengers is Col. Wright, son of the lamented general; Mr. Noah,[1] brother-in-law of Mr Richards, of the firm of Richards and McCraken; one of the firm of Gray & Co., undertakers, and others. Capt. Hartshorne of the California Steamship Navigation Company, also goes up to see what can be done.

Metal caskets for returning the dead accompanied the representative of Nathaniel Gray, San Francisco undertaker and importer and manufacturer of burial caskets. His business, founded in 1850, was advertised as "the oldest and most extensive establishment on the Pacific Coast."[2]

The same newspaper provided the venue for this macabre commercial notice:

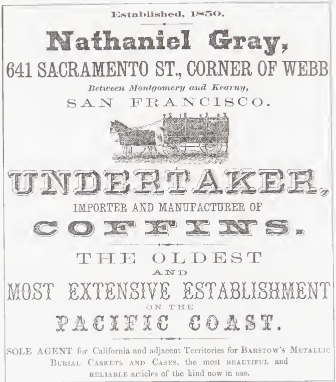
Fearful Loss Of Life:

We venture to say that [illegible] on board the *Brother Jonathan* would have been saved if they had [illegible] & Co.'s life preserving vests, and the price places them within reach of all.

The San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* updated its readers, commenting (in part):

A large number of relatives and friends of the passengers, among them Col. Wright, son of Gen. Wright, and Mr. Knower, brother-in-law of James R. Richards, went up on the *Del Norte* this morning to the scene of the accident in hopes of recovering the bodies of their friends. Among them was a party from this office who went to search for the body of Mr. Nisbet. A thorough search of the coast in the vicinity of the catastrophe will be made for that purpose, and there is a possibility that some of the passengers may yet be found alive.

The *Sacramento Daily Bee* reprinted this item from the *San Jose Courier* relative to the seaworthiness of the ship, but did not credit its source until well into the article:



Advertisement for Nathaniel Gray's undertaking business as published in Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1865-6. For the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy, Gray furnished zinc caskets for shipping remains from the Crescent City area down to the San Francisco area, where most were buried.

The community was shocked this morning with the intelligence of the loss of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*. It appears that out of 300 persons, only 16 escaped. The *Alta* states that she was considered to be one of the staunchest vessels on the Pacific Coast.

The community in general, who knew anything about her, considered her an old tub, and the fact that she belonged to the California Steam Navigation Company might have some weight with the *Alta's* opinion.[3] The fact is this:

The steamer is the old *Commodore*, which ran in the New York and Stonington line, and had the engines of the *Atlantic* which was wrecked in 1848 off Fisher's Island, Long Island Sound. The *Commodore's* engines have been in service ever since that time, now 16 or 17 years, and how old they were at that date is unknown. It is generally supposed that 12 or 14 years reduce the staunchness of a sea-going vessel, and when it is asserted that the *Brother Jonathan* was regarded as one of the staunchest vessels afloat, it is evidently for the purpose of covering up the fact that an old hulk was kept running until she sank with her living freight.

If she struck upon a sunken rock, how it is that no other particulars are known? Being old and rotten she probably sprung a leak at once, hence the few survivors. These, we think, will prove to be the facts in the case.

[1] San Francisco police officer J.G. Knower; apparently, the name was spoken aloud but not spelled to the correspondent, and "Noah" resulted.
[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 608. "Sole agent for California and adjacent territories for Barstow's metallic burial caskets and cases, the most beautiful and reliable articles of the kind now in use."
[3] CSN advertised extensively in the *Alta California*.

The above, from the *San Jose Courier,* is incorrect in many particulars. First, the steamer *Commodore,* of the New York and Stonington line, not only never was on the Pacific Coast, but is now a night packet between Albany and New York. Second, the *Atlantic* was wrecked November 26, 1846, not 1848.

The *Brother Jonathan* was built up in New York in 1851, but when Vanderbilt sold her to J.T. Wright in 1857, the latter called her the *Commodore.* The California Steam Navigation Company bought her in 1861 and cut off her upper deck, tore off all her planking, and took out all the unsound timbers. She was made a two-deck ship, and was as strong as any vessel on the coast, except perhaps the *Golden Age,* which was constructed originally for the Liverpool trade.[1] Had she been as strong as the *Dictator* or *Ironsides,* she would have sunk almost instantly, for she was evidently going at the top of her speed, and nothing could stand the violence of such a shock.[2]

We do not believe that the California Steam Navigation Company would send any vessel to sea that was not perfectly seaworthy in every respect. They had the *Orizaba*, an A-1 ship of her size, and would have sent her in place of the *Brother Jonathan* had the latter been at all amiss. The accident is no fault of the vessel or its owners; it is one of those mysterious and inscrutable visitations of Providence that makes grief-stricken mourners bow their heads and say, "Thy will be done."

The *Sacramento Union* August 4, 1865, printed correspondence from San Francisco datelined August 2:

> It is stated in one of the morning papers that the engines of the *Brother Jonathan* were taken from the steamer *Atlantic*, wrecked 17 long years ago in Long Island Sound. It would have been hard to find a crew for the *Jonathan* among sailors of the olden time under such circumstances, for they had a strong belief in lucky ships and in precedents. Never a man would have shipped aboard a craft whose masts were taken from a vessel that had gone drifting to destruction with all on board.
>
> But the romance of the sea has altogether died out with the introduction of steam, and with it all the delightful old superstitions have gone. Sailors now days are a practical and philosophical set; no more flaunty hats, white trousers and blue jackets. In their stead we have grimed firemen and greasy engineers; men at the wheel who couldn't steer a trick "full and lye" to save their lives, and never a hand fore or aft who could stow the bunt of a sail handsomely, make a respectable "long splice," or do anything better than chuck coal into a furnace or grease a gudgeon.
>
> Think of a *Monitor,* with its smoke-stack and turret; never a chance to go aloft to reef a topsail or set a skysail, and the men all boxed up down below like Scotch herrings in a tin can! Fancy Black-Eyed Susan coming aboard our *Camanche* with: "Now, tell me sailors, tell me true, Does my Sweet William sail among your crew?" and being told that she'd find him down in the coal hole!...
>
> Little the wonder that the old chivalry and freedom of the seas is passing away, and instead of the jolly tar who was always hitching up his trousers and drinking grog and spending his wages we have a race of fellows who save their money and wear stove-pipe hats instead of tarpaulins....
>
> This is Steamer Day, too, and those who had friends, wives, perhaps, sons, fathers or mothers upon the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* must be busy with their correspondence for the East. They must carefully calculate the price of gold and number how many quintals of codfish are in the market, for business must be attended to though our heart strings crack and great tears blot the ledger....

The *Oregonian,* August 4, 1865, included this:

> Sorrowed Incidents: The loss of life occasioned by the sinking of the steamship *Brother Jonathan* has caused much sorrow in this community. The pain of mind produced at the loss of friends is hard to be borne at any time, but when an event as calamitous as this has been strikes down those who among us were respected and loved for their virtues, it is cause sufficient for the whole community to grieve that their earthly career was suddenly and disastrously terminated....[3]
>
> That we shall see the familiar faces of those who were on board no more, seems utterly impossible. That we shall never again apply to the noble hearted master of the *Brother Jonathan*, Capt. S.J. DeWolf or the merry and pleasant chief officer, Mr. W.A.H. Allen, or to Mr. John S. Benton, the purser, and to those whom we know, for information concerning matters commercial, seems to us impossible. We still indulge the hope that yet more may be saved, that the disaster will yet prove to be less terrible, but in doing this we may be hoping against fate, and finally realize that the beating surf and rolling breakers alone chant the requiem over their watery graves.

The Reports Continue (August 5)

As the days passed, more information reached print, including the report of a hoax and editor's theory as to why more people were not saved (although he seems to have had no clue as to the actual circumstances aboard ship as she sank). Little new in the way of facts was given.

The *Alta California* informed its readers:

> The steamship *Del Norte* left for the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* last evening, carrying a number of parties who had friends on board the ill-fated steamer, who go in search of their remains. Strict search will be made along the entire shore for a sufficient distance up and down to ensure the discovery of any bodies which may have drifted in, or any survivors who might have by any means reached shore.
>
> The reports of dispatches announcing the rescue of a number of persons not previously reported, which were so generally circulated yesterday, were, we regret to say, cruel hoaxes only calculated to create hopes in all probability destined to be disappointed. No such dispatches were received.

The editor of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* who knew nothing of the actual circumstances of the disaster and even listed the incorrect owner of the ship, wrote a long-winded commentary (not quoted here) on safety at sea, concluding that the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* was improperly equipped. He then offered a remedy to prevent future tragedies:

[1] The *Golden Age,* 2,281 tons, was built in 18[illegible] in New York, which was also her first home port. She later served on the West Coast [illegible]. In 1875 the ship was sold to foreign interests [illegible].

[2] This "corrected account" had its own errors; the *Brother Jonathan* had been launched in 18[illegible], not 1851. Vanderbilt had no commercial interest in the ship after 1854.

[3] At this point expressions of sympathy were given concerning the families of Capt. N.C. Brooks, James R. Richards Sr., M. Crandall, [illegible], and Mary Berry; these are reprinted under the biographical notes regarding these people in the Appendix III Passenger List of the *Brother Jonathan*.

Quite a number of our citizens are thought to have been on board, who were in San Francisco lately, and expected to be on their return. Dr. Henry of Washington Territory, and a family named Lukey [Luckey], supposed to belong near Eugene City, arrived from the East on the 25th by the steamship *Constitution*, and it is thought they were on the *Brother Jonathan*.

Col. Wm. Logan and family of The Dalles, and Mr. Richards of San Francisco, were also on board. The most affecting scenes occurred in the city on the reception of the news, among those who had relatives or friends on the vessel, and the telegraph office was crowded with people eager to hear all that was possible concerning the wreck.... Mr. McCraken, Mr. Arrigoni, and possibly others, design leaving by stage this morning hoping to reach the scene of the disaster, and render assistance....

The Third Day of News Accounts (August 4)

Each day brought a recapitulation of what had been stated before, with new information added. Then, as now, the public had an insatiable appetite for news of unfortunate events. By August 4 the facts were still sketchy at best.

The *Alta California* told of a search party:

> GOING IN SEARCH OF THE DEAD: The steamship *Del Norte* leaves for the north today, carrying a number of the friends of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* disaster, who go to the scene of the wreck in the hope of being able to recover the remains of those so dear to them in life.
>
> Among the passengers is Col. Wright, son of the lamented general, Mr. Noah,[1] brother-in-law of Mr. Richards of the firm of Richards and McCraken, one of the firm of Gray & Co., undertakers, and others. Capt. Hartshorne of the California Steam Navigation Company also goes up to see what can be done.
>
> Metal caskets for returning the dead were supplied by [illegible] of Nathaniel Gray, San Francisco undertaker and importer and manufacturer of burial caskets. The business, founded in 1850, was advertised as "the oldest and most extensive establishment on the Pacific Coast."[2]

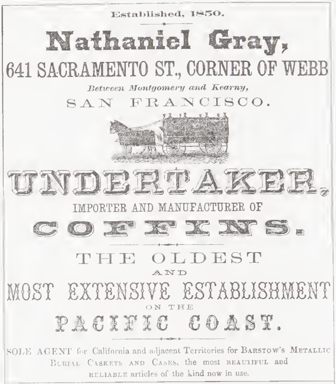
The same newspaper provided the venue for this macabre commercial notice:

> Fearful Loss Of Life:
>
> We venture to say that everyone on board the *Brother Jonathan* would have been saved if they had [illegible] and the price places them within reach of all.

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* updated its readers, commenting in part:

> A large number of citizens and friends of the unfortunate—among them Col. Wright, son of Gen. Wright, and Mr. Knower, brother-in-law of James B. Richards, went up on the *Del Norte* this afternoon to the scene of the accident, in hopes of recovering the bodies of their friends. Among them also a party from this office who went to search for the body of [illegible]. A thorough search of the coast in the vicinity of the catastrophe will be made for that purpose, and there is a possibility that some of the passengers may yet be found alive.

The *Sacramento Daily Bee* reprinted this item from the *San Jose Courier* relative to the seaworthiness of the ship, but did not credit its source until well into the article:



Advertisement for Nathaniel Gray's undertaking business as published in Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1865-6. For the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy, Gray furnished zinc caskets for shipping remains from the Crescent City area down to the San Francisco area, where most were buried.

> The community was shocked this morning with the intelligence of the loss of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*. It appears that out of 300 persons, only 16 escaped. The *Alta* states that she was considered to be one of the staunchest vessels on the Pacific Coast.
>
> The community in general, who knew anything about her, considered her an old tub, and the fact that she belonged to the California Steam Navigation Company might have some weight with the *Alta*'s opinion.[3] The fact is this:
>
> The steamer is the old *Commodore*, which ran in the New York and Stonington line, and had the engines of the *Atlantic* which was wrecked in 1848 off Fisher's Island, Long Island Sound. The *Commodore's* engines have been in service ever since that time, now 16 or 17 years, and how old they were at that date is unknown. It is generally supposed that 12 or 14 years reduce the staunchness of a sea-going vessel, and when it is asserted that the *Brother Jonathan* was regarded as one of the staunchest vessels afloat, it is evidently for the purpose of covering up the fact that an old hulk was kept running until she sank with her living freight.
>
> If she struck upon a sunken rock, how it is that no other particulars are known? Being old and rotten she probably sprung a leak at once, hence the few survivors. These, we think, will prove to be the facts in the case.

[1] San Francisco police officer J.G. Knower; apparently, the name was spoken aloud but not spelled to the correspondent, and "Noah" resulted.
[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 608. "Sole agent for California and adjacent territories for Barstow's metallic burial caskets and cases, the most beautiful and reliable articles of the kind now in use."
[3] CSN advertised extensively in the *Alta California*.

The above, from the *San Jose Courier*, is incorrect in many particulars. First, the steamer *Commodore*, of the New York and Stonington line, not only never was on the Pacific Coast, but is now a night packet between Albany and New York. Second, the *Atlantic* was wrecked November 26, 1846, not 1848.

The *Brother Jonathan* was built up in New York in 1851, but when Vanderbilt sold her to J.T. Wright in 1857, the latter called her the *Commodore*. The California Steam Navigation Company bought her in 1861 and cut off her upper deck, tore off all her planking, and took out all the unsound timbers. She was made a two-deck ship, and was as strong as any vessel on the coast, except perhaps the *Golden Age*, which was constructed originally for the Liverpool trade.[1] Had she been as strong as the *Dictator* or *Ironsides*, she would have sunk almost instantly, for she was evidently going at the top of her speed, and nothing could stand the violence of such a shock.[2]

We do not believe that the California Steam Navigation Company would send any vessel to sea that was not perfectly seaworthy in every respect. They had the *Orizaba*, an A-1 ship of her size, and would have sent her in place of the *Brother Jonathan* had the latter been at all amiss. The accident is no fault of the vessel or its owners; it is one of those mysterious and inscrutable visitations of Providence that makes grief-stricken mourners bow their heads and say, "Thy will be done."

The *Sacramento Union* August 4, 1865, printed correspondence from San Francisco datelined August 2:

> It is stated in one of the morning papers that the engines of the *Brother Jonathan* were taken from the steamer *Atlantic*, wrecked 17 long years ago in Long Island Sound. It would have been hard to find a crew for the *Jonathan* among sailors of the olden time under such circumstances, for they had a strong belief in lucky ships and in precedents. Never a man would have shipped aboard a craft whose masts were taken from a vessel that had gone drifting to destruction with all on board.
>
> But the romance of the sea has altogether died out with the introduction of steam, and with it all the delightful old superstitions have gone. Sailors now days are a practical and philosophical set; no more flaunty hats, white trousers and blue jackets. In their stead we have grimed firemen and greasy engineers; men at the wheel who couldn't steer a trick "full and lye" to save their lives, and never a hand fore or aft who could stow the bunt of a sail handsomely, make a respectable "long splice," or do anything better than chuck coal into a furnace or grease a gudgeon.
>
> Think of a *Monitor*, with its smoke-stack and turret, never a chance to go aloft to reef a topsail or set a skysail, and the men all boxed up down below like Scotch herrings in a tin can! Fancy Black-Eyed Susan coming aboard our *Camanche* with: "Now, tell me sailors, tell me true, Does my Sweet William sail among your crew?" and being told that she'd find him down in the coal hole!...
>
> Little the wonder that the old chivalry and freedom of the seas is passing away, and instead of the jolly tar who was always hitching up his trousers and drinking grog and spending his wages we have a race of fellows who save their money and wear stove-pipe hats instead of tarpaulins....
>
> This is Steamer Day, too, and those who had friends, wives, perhaps, sons, fathers or mothers upon the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* must be busy with their correspondence for the East. They must carefully calculate the price of gold and number how many quintals of codfish are in the market, for business must be attended to though our heart strings crack and great tears blot the ledger....

The *Oregonian*, August 4, 1865, included this:

> Sorrowed Incidents: The loss of life occasioned by the sinking of the steamship *Brother Jonathan* has caused much sorrow in this community. The pain of mind produced at the loss of friends is hard to be borne at any time, but when an event as calamitous as this has been strikes down those who among us were respected and loved for their virtues, it is cause sufficient for the whole community to grieve that their earthly career was suddenly and disastrously terminated....[3]
>
> That we shall see the familiar faces of those who were on board no more, seems utterly impossible. That we shall never again apply to the noble hearted master of the *Brother Jonathan*, Capt. S.J. DeWolf or the merry and pleasant chief officer, Mr. W.A.H. Allen, or to Mr. John S. Benton, the purser, and to those whom we know, for information concerning matters commercial, seems to us impossible. We still indulge the hope that yet more may be saved, that the disaster will yet prove to be less terrible, but in doing this we may be hoping against fate, and finally realize that the beating surf and rolling breakers alone chant the requiem over their watery graves.

The Reports Continue (August 5)

As the days passed, more information reached print, including the report of a hoax and editor's theory as to why more people were not saved (although he seems to have had no clue as to the actual circumstances aboard ship as she sank). Little new in the way of facts was given.

The *Alta California* informed its readers:

> The steamship *Del Norte* left for the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* last evening, carrying a number of parties who had friends on board the ill-fated steamer, who go in search of their remains. Strict search will be made along the entire shore for a sufficient distance up and down to ensure the discovery of any bodies which may have drifted in, or any survivors who might have by any means reached shore.
>
> The reports of dispatches announcing the rescue of a number of persons not previously reported, which were so generally circulated yesterday, were, we regret to say, cruel hoaxes, only calculated to create hopes in all probability destined to be disappointed. No such dispatches were received.

The editor of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, who knew nothing of the actual circumstances of the disaster and even listed the incorrect owner of the ship, wrote a long-winded commentary (not quoted here) on safety at sea, concluding that the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* was improperly equipped. He then offered a remedy to prevent future tragedies:

[1] The *Golden Age*, 2,281 tons, was built in 1853 in New York, which was also her first home port. She later served on the West Coast for many years. In 1875 the ship was sold to foreign interests [illegible].
[2] This "corrected account" had its own errors; the *Brother Jonathan* had been launched in 1850, not 1851; Vanderbilt had no commercial interest in the ship after 1854.
[3] At this point expressions of sympathy were given concerning the families of Capt. N.C. Brooks, James R. Richards, [illegible] M. Crandall, Isaac West and Mary Berry; these are reprinted under the biographical notes regarding these people in the Appendix III Passenger List of the *Brother Jonathan*.

The late lamentable catastrophe of the sinking of the steamer *Brother Jonathan* at sea, by which some 180 fellow beings have perished, has caused a shudder of anguish to sweep over our land. Among the dead are many of our most worthy and noted citizens, whose untimely end has indeed proved a literal illustration to us that "in the midst of life we are in death"...

Is it necessary that such a state of things should continue? That human life shall be the sport of circumstances, and that those who voyage on the deep shall literally each carry his or her life in their hands? Shall these terrible accidents and wholesale immolation of human beings continue while there is a remedy which makes it certain that not one out of 10 who takes to the boats will be lost or perish in getting free from the vessel.

There is a remedy cheap and practical, the use of which has saved thousands of lives which otherwise would have been lost. It has been thoroughly tested under all circumstances that were adverse to human safety, and so far as known, has never failed. I allude to "Clifford's Patent boat-lowering gear," an English invention, which is used extensively in the British navy, transport and colonial service. It is so simple as not to be liable to get out of order, and by it one man who stands amidships in the boat controls the lowering of the boat. The instant the [illegible] the weight of the boat slips free. There is no chance of entanglement of ropes, no difficulty of lowering under any circumstances, no chance for boats being dashed to pieces alongside or swamped if a heavy sea [illegible]...

Had the *Brother Jonathan* had this gear on her boats, every boat [illegible] would have got clear of the steamer with a full load of passengers. With her engines stopped, the forward boats would have been equally successful. The gear is simple and cheap, not costing over $300 to be applied to the largest [illegible]. Will our steamship owners [illegible] this simple, practical [illegible], or will cupidity and [illegible] continue to imperil the lives of the [illegible] thousands of our [illegible] business, pleasure, or [illegible] the deep [illegible]...

I call on Capt. [illegible] of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company [illegible] the California, Oregon and Mexico Steam Navigation Co. [illegible] lowering gear is used on [illegible]. If he adopts it, others will follow his example [illegible] a blessing to those who [illegible].

A writer for *The Oregon Reporter*, published in Jacksonville, August 5, had few facts at hand and said so, but this did not deter him from writing the following:

An [illegible] from Crescent City arrived here on Tuesday evening [illegible] with the startling intelligence that the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, bound from San Francisco to Portland, struck on a sunken rock off Point St. George, about five miles north of Crescent City, and sank within [illegible] carrying down with her all of her passengers [illegible] among whom were Gen. Wright with his family and staff, and crew except [illegible]. We have received no details [illegible] going to press.

Thus another [illegible] sacrifice of hundreds of valuable lives has been made to the cold-blooded avarice of the steamship companies. The *Brother Jonathan* was an old, unseaworthy vessel, unfitted to be entrusted with the carriage of valuable human lives and property along this [illegible] coast. Her owners knew her to be an old, unsafe hulk. She is probably insured for twice her value, and her loss was coolly calculated on during one of her trips, when her insurance would fill their pockets, although the lives of hundreds of innocent men, women, and children might be lost in the operation. This is no better than cool-blooded, diabolical murder, and the perpetrators of it should be hung high....

It is high time that the law should be enforced against corporations which are no better than licensed freebooters and murderers who trade upon the lives of women and children as if they were stalled oxen or fatted sheep. This coast has become the graveyard of the worn out, condemned coffins of these companies. After steamers have become so unsafe as to be unprofitable elsewhere, the steamship companies seem to think they are good enough for this—one of the most inhospitable coasts, and they are crowded full of confiding, helpless women, children, and men, when the least touch of rock or sand bar, and the ship parts like a piece of useless crockery, leaving its precious freight to struggle and die [after which] the company complacently pockets the insurance.

The blood of thousands of victims by the wrecks of the *Warren*, the *Northerner*, the *Brother Jonathan*, and other instruments of wholesale murder too numerous to mention, demand that some adequate penalty should be imposed on the perpetrators of these horrible crimes.[1] Too many victims have already been sacrificed to the cupidity of steamship companies....

In the same issue of *The Oregon Reporter* two more articles appeared, with at least a few facts, obviously written after the preceding, one about Gen. Wright and the other given herewith:

LATEST FROM THE WRECK: Mr. A.H. Miller arrived from Crescent City this week. He reports that in less than 15 minutes after the *Brother Jonathan* struck, pieces of the bottom of the ship came up alongside. Soon afterward the foremast went through the bottom. It is reported also that one of the ship's boats came ashore, bottom upwards, about 20 miles below Crescent City. The large proportion of the crew who were saved is creating comment. The crew of the boat saved report that after leaving the ship Captain DeWolf ordered them back, because there were too many of the ship's crew aboard, and the officer—Patterson—started to return to the ship, when the crew threatened to kill him if he did so, which threat caused him to abandon his intention of returning.

It is also said that a Chinaman who got into the boat was killed by a blow from an oar in the hands of one of the crew. His wife and child were among the saved.

This appeared in the *Sacramento Union* August 5, 1865, based upon correspondence from San Francisco, August 4:

[1] The *Joseph Warren* was wrecked on November 25, 1853, at Yaquina Bay, Oregon (cf. James A. Gibbs, Jr., *Shipwrecks of the Pacific Coast*, 1957, p. 272). • The *Northerner*, a 203 foot sidewheel steamer built by William H. Brown, New York, 1847, first served on the New York City to Charleston run. In 1850 she was sold to the Empire City Line and put on the San Francisco to Panama route for a few months, then sold to the Pacific Mail Steamship Co., for use as a secondary vessel as the ship was too slow for either mail or extensive passenger service. Beginning in 1857 Pacific Mail put her on the San Francisco to Puget Sound run. On January 5, 1860, on the way into Humboldt Bay on California's northern coast, the ship hit a rock two miles below Blunt's Reef. The *Northerner* was able to swing away from the rock and head for shore, at which time a boat with all but two of the women and children passengers was successfully launched. Others escaped on a line strung from the boat to the shore. However, 32 perished, seemingly unnecessarily, by panicking and jumping from the boat into the water (cf. Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, Vol. 1, 1953, p. 305).

Reports of dispatches from the north giving accounts of the rescue of several more of those who were on the *Brother Jonathan* have been circulated extensively today, and in some cases placarded on the bulletin boards. They are found to have originated with clairvoyants and spiritualists. One lady, whose husband was on board, left on the *Del Norte* in full expectation of meeting her husband alive, but with his leg broken, she having been told he drifted ashore with another man on a plank at Trinidad.

The *Oregonian* included this:

The loss of the steamship *Brother Jonathan* has been the theme of the week. The great loss of life has made it a matter of fearful interest, and the whole community felt its effects. There was a very large and valuable cargo on board of her, mostly merchandise....

Wholesale and Jobbing Prices, Portland August 4th, 1865:

Flour firm at previous quotations. There was a large quantity on the steamship *Brother Jonathan*, the loss of which causes the market here to be rather firm at present....

A Boy's Premonition (August 8)

The *San Francisco Call,* August 8, 1865, included an account which furnished the basis for this story in *Oregonian* one week later:

The *San Francisco Call* of August 8th relates a singular incident in connection with the family of Mr. Charles W. Plass, of Napa, the father of Mrs. Brooks, wife of Capt. N.C. Brooks of the bark *Cambridge.* When Mrs. Brooks and her sister left the ranch at Napa, for San Francisco, for the purpose of taking passage to Portland, little Charlie, the eldest of the children, three years of age, was left behind. He was kept in ignorance of his mother's intended departure from California, and made to believe that she was merely on a visit to San Francisco.

On Sunday, July 30th, little Charlie, being still at the ranch, and utterly ignorant of his mother's whereabouts, seemed all at once seized with a paroxysm of grief, and stood transfixed, having told his grandmother, who was sitting by, that he had just seen "Ma and Aunt Mary go down into the water in a ship." In vain Mrs. Plass endeavored to pacify him, and during the whole afternoon his grief was so violent that the family were fearful he would go into spasms.

A few days afterwards came the dreadful tidings of the loss of the *Brother Jonathan*, with nearly all on board, the day and hour exactly corresponding with the singular vision—or whatever it was—of little Charlie. We do not mention this having the slightest bearing on any of the modern metaphysical theories, or as laying claim to supernatural causes. It may have been a mere whim of the child's, and the harmony between the facts of the wreck and the incident at the Napa ranch a mere accident. We leave others to decide.

Survivors Return (August 9)

First-person accounts from survivors began to emerge when the steamer *Del Norte* arrived in San Francisco from the disaster site. Certain of these have been given earlier in the present text. In addition, these items were included:

The steamer *Del Norte,* which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half-past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.

Memoranda:

Steamship *Del Norte,* Henry G. Johnson,[1] commander, sailed from San Francisco August 4th at 5 p.m.; arrived at Crescent City August 6th, at 4 a.m., sailed same day at 5 p.m.; arrived at Eureka August 7th at 8 a.m.; sailed August 9th at 1 a.m.; passed the steamship *Sierra Nevada,* bound north; arriving at San Francisco, August 9th.[2]

Passengers:

Col. T.J. Wright, U.S.A, Mrs. Stark and boy, Capt. Pollock, U.S., C.S. Ricks, B. Hartshorne,[3] J.J. DeHaven, Levi Parsons,[4] Charles Smith, Mrs. W.W. Montague,[5] John Dolbin, D.H. Woods, W.R. Brown, J.W. Henderson, C.H. Ryan, C.C. Broderick, Charles Lord,[6] Joseph Wall, J.A. Hooper, Walter Turnbull,[7] J. Suydam,[8] Mrs. Benton, Mrs. E. Dunson, and 14 others Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt,[9] Miss M.G. Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child and 11 of the crew from the wreck of the steamship *Brother Jonathan*.

Among the passengers of the *Del Norte,* are Colonel Wright, Captain Pollock, Mr. Lord, and others who went up for the purpose of endeavoring to recover the bodies, or learn some tidings of their missing friends. From their speedy return we are led to the conclusion that they received information at Crescent City which caused them to abandon all hope.

An unidentified "special correspondent" of the *Bulletin* filed this account written in Crescent City on the 6th:

The Upward Trip of the "Del Norte."

We left San Francisco, August 4, 1865, on the steamship *Del Norte*, Capt. Henry Johnson, for the wreck of the ill-fated ship *Brother Jonathan*, along with a great many persons who were on the same errand as ourselves—that is, to search for the bodies, dead or alive, of the persons who were on board at the time of the disaster.

We arrived at this port at 8 a.m. on the 6th of August having had a very pleasant passage, as the sea was smooth and nothing occurred to make the occasion unpleasant except thinking of the sad nature of our errand. On board of the steamer are sons in search of fathers and mothers, others in search of

[1] In various contemporary accounts his surname was [illegible] Johnston and even Jackson.

[2] Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest, p. 134, devotes considerable space (including a portrait) to Frederick Bolles, who was the first officer under Captain Johnson of the *Del Norte* in August 1865.

[3] Benjamin M. Hartshorne was a trustee of the California Steam Navigation Company. He lived at 325 First Street, San Francisco.

[4] Parsons was an attorney at 702 Washington Street, San Francisco.

[5] Of the firm Locke & Montague, importers and jobbers of stoves, metal ware, woodenware, [illegible], etc., 112 and 114 Battery Street. The other partner, S. Morris Locke, lived in New York. Mrs. Montague lived at the southwest corner of First and Folsom streets, San Francisco.

[6] Of Lord, Stall & Co. (also known as Pond, Stall & Co.), importers and wholesalers of wines and liquors, 419 Front Street. Charles S. Lord lived at 52 Folsom Street.

[7] Of Turnbull & Smith, book and job printers, 611 Commercial Street. Turnbull lived at 108 Prospect Place.

[8] James A. Suydam, wholesale grocer, 104 [illegible] Street. Lived at 626 Harrison Street.

[9] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. Mina Bernhardt. She had her child with her.

children, brothers in search of sisters, and almost everyone in search of some lost friend. We did not stop at Eureka on our way up. We arrived off that place at 11_ o'clock p.m., on the 5th inst., but as there was no tug in sight with a pilot to take us over the bar, and as we had a great many passengers on board who were anxious to get to Crescent City, we kept on our course, taking the passengers who wished to land at Eureka to this place, intending to land them when we go back. The captain informs me that there have been times when he had to take passengers back to San Francisco, as the bar was so rough he could not get a pilot to come out and take him in.

When we arrived at this place a boat came alongside with Joe Wall, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messenger. Capt. Johnson asked him if there was any news from the ill-fated ship. He said there was not a word since the boat came to the shore with the persons that were saved. No bodies had been recovered although parties had been patrolling the beach night and day. Everybody was on deck listening, and they were all dumbfounded as he gave this intelligence. Mrs. Benton, wife of the purser of the *Brother Jonathan*, who came up with us to look after her husband, and everyone else who had near and dear friends on her, burst into tears, and there was hardly a dry eye among the friends and relations of the persons who were on the sunken ship. We went on shore with a small boat and had some conversation with the persons who were saved. [At this point the statement of Jacob Yates, the quartermaster who had been at the helm at the time of the tragedy, was inserted.]

Tales of the Calamity (August 10, 1865)

On the next day more information from survivors was printed, further revealing the scene aboard the *Brother Jonathan* during the fateful afternoon of July 30 and the arrival of survivors on shore.

The *Alta California* gave this from its "special correspondent," datelined Crescent City four days earlier:

> On Sunday, July 30th, at two o'clock p.m., the people of this quiet little town were surprised to see a small boat full of people come round Lighthouse Point, half a mile south west of our beach, and make for the landing. Quite a group had gathered when they touched shore. The boatload consisted of 11 men, 5 women and 3 children, 19 in all. They announced that they had escaped from the wreck of the Oregon steamer *Brother Jonathan*, which a few hours before had struck a ledge some 12 miles seaward.
>
> The third mate, Mr. Patterson, had charge of the rescued boat, and it was soon learned that the *Brother Jonathan* left San Francisco on Friday, noon, with about 150 cabin, 72 steerage passengers, and about 60 of the officers and crew. The north wind was strong from the outset, but the steamer made fair progress until after sunrise on Sunday. The swell then became so violent that less than half of the cabin passengers came to the breakfast table. At the 12 o'clock lunch a still less number was present.
>
> The wind continuing to increase in violence, Captain DeWolf took the bearings, and informed the officers that the steamer was four miles north of the latitude of Point St. George, which point is three miles above Crescent City. The wind continuing to increase in violence, Captain DeWolf at one o'clock gave orders to turn the steamer and steer for Crescent Harbor, 16 miles southeastward. The intention was to anchor in the bay till the next morning and then resume the trip.
>
> The Quartermaster (Yates) says that they had returned seven or eight miles, and were eight miles due west of Point St. George, when, without warning, the steamer struck with full force upon a sharp ledge, which, at the lowest ebb, projected about a yard above the surface. The bottom of the steamer went to pieces with a crash. In three minutes, says the wheelman, large fragments of the bottom and a part of the rudder were afloat alongside. There were no frantic acts among the passengers though they, as well as the officers, must have had a full sense of their awful peril. Capt. DeWolf ordered one of the larger boats lowered and filled with passengers, under the first mate. None of the rescued saw her till she was floating bottom upwards. The captain now ordered the second mate to lower his boat, already nearly filled with female cabin passengers, among whom was Mrs. General Wright. The boat was lowered, but before the seamen had time to man her, the steamer careened and upset her, throwing all on board into the water. The mate (Mr. Campbell) drew up such of the ladies as he could reach from the steamer's chains, where he held on.
>
> It was now 15 minutes since the collision, and the steamer was fast breaking to pieces. The third mate, (Mr. Patterson) who was asleep when the crash came, now lowered his small boat, and hurried on board five women and three children, who were nearest at hand. Ten of the crew leaped after him, including two wheelmen, steerage steward, and two firemen. The load was large for the boat, and she dipped incessantly, but the strong arm and coolness of the mate brought her 12 miles to Crescent harbor. Two guns were fired, just after the boat left the steamer, and she disappeared under the billows about 15 minutes later.
>
> Captain DeWolf, Gen. Wright, Mr. Lord (Wells Fargo & Co.'s messenger), and Mr. Nisbet, were on deck when last seen by the rescued crew. There were two boats on the deck when the third mate left, but owing to the terrible violence of the sea it is not probable that either of them could have been launched. The citizens of Crescent City immediately sent out boats, but found it utterly impossible to go within six miles of the wreck. These attempts were continually renewed on Monday and Tuesday, but it was not till Wednesday afternoon that the spot could be reached. The wreck, probably, lies 100 feet below the surface. There were about 700 [*sic*] tons of merchandise freight, beside the passengers' baggage, all closely under hatch.
>
> At this time (Sunday 3 p.m.) not a single body has been recovered, or a person heard of, save those who reached shore in the boat of the third mate. It is generally thought that the fragments and floating baggage drifted southward. A shattered boat, mattress and a few buckets are all that have been picked up. Something more will probably drift ashore between here and Humboldt, but we are reluctantly led to believe that not another living person of the 240 on the ill-fated steamer, save the 19 now here, will ever be found.
>
> It was thought that the Newfoundland dog of Captain DeWolf, a superb swimmer, would reach shore, but the rough billows were too much for him. The two camels, bound for Portland, were not loosened from their stall. Mr. Lord formerly resided here and was held in high esteem by our citizens. He had recently been on a visit here, and leaving his wife and child, had just returned to his post as messenger. –J.H.G.

The *Alta California* included this in another article:

> Steamship *Del Norte*, Henry J. Johnston [or Johnson] commander, sailed from San Francisco August 4th at 5 p.m.; arrived at Crescent City August 6 at 4 a.m.; sailed same day at 5 p.m., arrived at Eureka August 7th at 8 a.m.; sailed from Eu-

reka August 8th at 11 a.m.; August 9th at 1 a.m. passed the steamship *Sierra Nevada* bound north; arrived at San Francisco August 9th at 2 p.m.

Passengers: Col. T.J. Wright, U.S.A., Levi Parsons, D.H. Woods, Mrs. Stark and boy, J.J. DeHaven, P.H. Ryan, Charles Lord, J.A. Hooper, J. Sydam [Suydam], Mrs. E. Dupe, Mrs. M. Rhinehart [*sic;* Bernhardt intended], Mrs. Troudle [Tweedale], one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew from the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan.* Capt. Pollack, U.S.A., Benj. Hartshorne, Mrs. W.W. Montague, J.W. Henderson, C.S. Ricks, Chas. Smith, Wm. R. Brown, C.C. Broderick, Joseph Wall, Walter Turnbull, Mrs. Benton, and 11 others [*sic;* listed this way], Mrs. Stott and child, Miss M.E. Webster.

Treasure: Wells, Fargo & Co., $1,700; S. Sinsinham, $850; J. Frank, $1,900; A. Jacoby, $1,000. Total, $5,400.

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* gave an account which included the official report of G.W. Emery, keeper of the lighthouse at Crescent City:

Crescent City Light Station, August 1, 1865:

Sir–

I have to report to you, in conformity to the printed instruction, that on the 30th day of July at about 2 o'clock p.m., the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, from San Francisco, bound to Portland, Oregon, was wrecked on a sunken rock 10 miles northwest of this light, in a strong breeze, wind from the north west. This vessel was not seen from the light, it being foggy and smoky weather, struck at about 2 o'clock p.m., from the best and most reliable information that can be obtained.

The crew and passengers consisted of about 250 souls, as well as can be ascertained from the survivors of whom 231 perished, and the remainder of the crew and passengers–19 in number came ashore in one of the ship's boats, were saved, and are now at Crescent City. Every assistance in my power was rendered to those on board of the wreck, which was as follows, namely. All the surf boats and whale boats of Crescent City immediately went to the place where the wreck was last seen, to render such assistance as was necessary to all who might still be alive; and after none being found, the boats returned. However, the ship's boat reported that the ship sunk stern [*sic*] first in about 45 minutes after she struck. Boats are still cruising–the sea being very heavy, and continues to be foggy and smoky. there has not a fragment yet been seen.

The weather at the time of the wreck was foggy and smoky not being able to see half a mile from shore; wind blowing strong and has since. the crew passengers number about 250, of which 19 have been saved. what the cargo consisted of I cannot say, but it will prove a total loss.

Respectfully, G.W. Emery Principal Keeper,

to Commander J.W. Webster, Lighthouse Inspector Twelfth District, San Francisco.

The reputation of Mrs. John C. Keenan, variously reported to be a saloonkeeper from Victoria or a madam with a house of prostitution in San Francisco, was *not* associated with certain survivors, as this item in the *Bulletin* implied:

Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and her son Paul, who were among the saved, were in no way connected with the party of Mrs. Keenan. Mrs. B is a German lady of respectable family and was on her way to Victoria to join some relatives living in the British Possession.

Items Found (August 10-15)

In the two weeks since the disaster, various bodies had been found along the coast, including two reported on August 10 by Mr. White, driver of the Crescent City Stage.

On August 14, this dispatch dated the previous day appeared in the *Alta California:*

Jacksonville, OR., August 13th:

We get the following from a private letter from Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City, to C.C. Beekman, agent of Wells Fargo & Co., at this place:

"Crescent City, August 9th.–No one saved from the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan*, except first boat load, noticed in papers of the 2d and 3d inst., and no bodies have, as yet, been found, but today some of the wreck is coming ashore; a spanker boom, some of the cabin doors and about eight feet square of the upper deck and one trunk of clothing, marked A.A. Stone, Portland, Oregon, came ashore."

Later.–In a private letter from Dugan & Wall, dated Crescent City, the 10th, to C.C. Beckman, agent of Wells Fargo & Co., is the following:

"The body of George W. Pollock was brought ashore to day; also, E. J. Lonate and the body of a soldier, unknown, supposed to be a sergeant in the United States service; and at Gold Bluffs a man and a boy, unknown, have been found."

The *Alta California* included this on August 15:

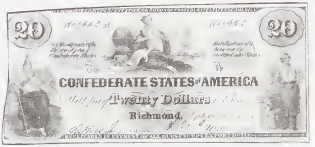
Jacksonville, August 14th: The following is from the correspondence received by the *Sentinel* from Mr. Dugan, of Crescent City:

"There has nobody, dead or alive, been saved from the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* except the first boat load that came ashore, as noticed in San Francisco papers of 2d and 3d [illegible], and no part of the wreck seen until about three days ago, when one of the ship's boats came ashore on the beach, two miles south of this place. But today a good deal of the ship is coming ashore. Pieces of the cabin doors, the part of upper deck, a spanker boom, one trunk, marked 'A.A. Stone, Portland,' containing women's and children's clothing and one pair of Colt revolvers, all in good order, except being wet. The articles will be dried and sent to San Francisco on next steamer going down.

"Wells, Fargo and Co.'s messenger, whose name you notice among the list of lost, was our beloved friend, Joseph A. Lord, whom we have known intimately for the last eight years, and mourn and feel his loss as deeply as we would a brother. His wife and child were here on a [illegible] intended returning to San Francisco on the *Del Norte* this week to join him. The shock was terrible to her. She is quite broken-hearted."

"Later.–Since writing the enclosed two more trunks have drifted ashore, one containing a [illegible] and [illegible], the other belonging to David [illegible] Russell. I have also just received a letter from Solomon Hall, of Gold Bluffs, 20 miles north of this, stating that a piece of wreck with a [illegible] came [illegible]

[1] Probably some type of [illegible] entertainment device. [illegible] of the [illegible] of long rolls of [illegible] which were [illegible] scenes. The [illegible] would be [illegible] vertically and [illegible] with a vertical [illegible] roll [illegible]. As the [illegible] was [illegible] such scenes as the Battle of Gettysburg or [illegible] would delight the viewers.



Confederate States of America $20 paper note of 1861, one of many different varieties produced in the South during the Civil War. A related note was found on a victim of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* tragedy. (Morgan, *et al.* Collections)

ashore at that place on Thursday night. on the person were found photographs of ladies and others; a memorandum book, with name of Ed. C. Ardift in it,[1] also, a $20 Confederate note. The portion of the wreck is described as the part between the wheelhouses, full width of the ship and about 40 feet long."

The *Evening Bulletin* has the following: Crescent City, August 10th, 5 p.m. Via Canonville, August 12th–10 p.m.

On the 3d inst. the body of a man came ashore on a part of the wreck, supposed to be that of a steerage passenger. [illegible]

[illegible]

The [illegible] printed a condemnation on August 14:

Reprehensible Conduct:

[illegible]

disaster. This conduct is quite in keeping with all the performances of this Company. For the sake of money they will use unseaworthy vessels, in a trade where good ships are required, but when one of them is wrecked and there is no chance of saving any of the rigging or material, they neglect to send relief to such as may survive, because the see no promise of money in the undertaking.

Another thing that we wish to notice is, the fact that too many unsound vessels are used in the Oregon trade. Some of these rotten carcasses of ships are so frail that the very rats long ago instinctively quit them. Any vessel running upon a sunken rock in the manner of the *Brother Jonathan*, is liable, or perhaps certain, to sink, but it seems hardly probable that the ship would have been lost at all, had she been quite staunch and in good condition. When she struck the fatal rock she was running for Crescent City harbor. Now, why was she thus put about? Why, unless the Captain was in fear lest with her heavy freight, and a fresh breeze blowing, there was danger of her going down? There was no storm at all at the time. There was simply a brisk northwest wind, such as is quite common at this season of the year, but it was not violent enough to have endangered any vessel which is fit to go to sea.

The Oregon trade is of sufficient importance to have none but good vessels engaged in it. Our trade is the very best and most profitable on the northern coast. Every trip from San Francisco to Portland and back yields a clear return of a sum never falling below fifteen thousand, and often reaching thirty-five or forty thousand dollars. So much for the actual gains of those who have the monopoly here old hulks that are better fitted to have accomplished the stone fleet that blockaded the mouth of Charleston harbor, than to be entrusted with a cargo of human lives. Portland needs two or three new steamers of her own. She is rich enough to possess them. A sum amounting to several times their value could thus be saved to Oregon every year. If we had new ships, travelers would not find it necessary to close their worldly affairs and make their wills before they go to sea. Shall we have these ships? It is as easy to procure them as to decide to do so.

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 15, included this under the title of "Account of a Trip from Eureka to Gold Bluff; The Search for the Bodies of the Lost":

We started from Eureka on the morning of August 8th, a party of four persons, and a guide, to patrol the beach between Eureka and Gold Bluff. We arrived at Arcata, about 12 miles distant, in time to get dinner and feed our animals; and then we started on our journey towards the beach, which was about five miles on a trail. Here we patrolled the beach for 12 miles, until we struck the trail for Trinidad, which is about three miles long and very hard traveling, especially for a person who is not used to the saddle. We arrived at Trinidad at about 7 o'clock p.m., and stopped for the night.

On our way up we found the beach literally strewed with nearly every part of the wrecked ship from her keel up, and trunks, vegetables, and boxes, etc. We found a mail-bag marked "Postmaster, Victoria," filled with English papers; and I have a few of the papers and the mail-bag which I brought along with me. A trunk bearing the name G.W. Pollock was picked up by the Indians between Mad River and Little River, on Monday 7th August. It had been rifled of its contents except some letters and other papers, which will be taken to San Francisco

[1] Actually Ed. Cardiff (cf. *Alta California* August 17, 1865).

By a person who sails on the bark *Jeanette*, the vessel which takes this letter...

At the mouth of Redwood Creek, about eight miles below Gold Bluff, on Wednesday, August 9th, there was picked up a memorandum book, supposed to belong to John L. Benton, purser of the *Jonathan*.... I have this book in my possession and will preserve it for his friends. Above Gold Bluff, on Tuesday, August 8th, was found a memorandum book with the name of Ed. Cardiff, (supposed to be the name of the man that came ashore on the plank.)....

The body of a young girl was found on the 9th, about four miles from the lighthouse off Eureka, by the beach patrol... The name of Mary Berry was written with indelible ink on the chemise. Around her neck was a cross and a small purse containing an Agnus Dei[1] probably, and which was recognized by the members of that church here, who took charge of the body. It was brought over to Eureka and was buried at Bucksport today. A large number of citizens followed her remains to the grave. She was about 17 years of age and had been very pretty.

There is every indication that a great many bodies will be recovered at this point, and below here, as there is a great deal of driftwood from the *Jonathan* off the beach.... There is hope that some of the bodies will drift ashore between here and Cape Mendocino. The soldiers are doing everything in their power to recover such as come in; they are patrolling the beach at every high tide night and day. Major Schmidt, who is commanding at Fort Humboldt, is using every exertion with the same object. While patrolling the beach today we found a camel, which was one of the two which belonged to H.C. Lee, the circus manager, who is now in Oregon awaiting the arrival of his wife and child, with the two camels and one horse. She and the child have surely perished. One of the persons who was saved in the Third Mate's boat had the child of Mrs. Lee in her arms a few minutes before the *Jonathan* struck.

The Story Continues (August 17 to August 28)

Investigations continued along the rockbound coast of northern California, and additional wreckage was discovered. The story of the disaster continued to be pieced together, and more was told of the lives of those who perished.

On August 17 this appeared in the *Alta California*.

Our marine reporters furnish the following memoranda:

Capt. N.C. Brooks, owner of the barque *Cambridge*, has just arrived from the scene of the wreck, where he has been looking for the remains of his wife, child and wife's sister, who were among the lost on the ill-fated steamer *Brother Jonathan*. The *Cambridge* sailed twice around the scene of the late disaster. The sea was smooth and the weather fine. Sounded, but found no bottom at 210 feet. Saw no signs of a wreck except a floating bucket rack. The spars had drifted on the beach at Crescent City. Considerable portion of the upper works, one bag of English mails and several trunks had been driven ashore a few miles below the city. The letters as I saw them were being dried, and in good state of preservation. Thirty-three bodies had been picked up, and more were coming ashore every day. Most of the bodies had been identified, among which were Nisbet, Parrish, Pollock, Dyer and Perkins, and others I do not recollect. A correct list will be forwarded by next mail.

All that had been picked up had life preservers on; it is supposed that those who were not provided with them, their bodies will not be found. Among the bodies found were three women and two children. The bodies of the women and children were in their night dresses when found, being evidence that most of them were in their berths at the time of the accident.

One female had on her person $1,600 in legal tenders. Another had two breastpins, similar, one on and the other in her pocket; the other had a bunch of silver-plated spoons tied to her waist. There is no doubt but that the upper works have washed away, as the boatmen reported large quantities of drift stuff between there and Trinidad, and that the hull remains as yet unbroken.

In a report of the finding of the bodies of several of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan*'s disaster, published in yesterday's *Alta*, the body upon which pictures and a memorandum book were found was described as that of Edward C. Arduff. We learn from an acquaintance of deceased that his real name was Edward Cardiff, a young man from Wisconsin, who came out here on the last steamer before the *Sacramento*, in company with three others, namely, Henry Abrams, Gilman Clendennin, the other name not known. They are from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and are known to a gentleman living in this city, on whom they called before leaving for Oregon. Cardiff has a brother in Oregon in the lumber business.

Many Bodies Recovered. (From the "Evening Bulletin," August 16th.) Crescent City, August 10th, 1865.

Since my last all our boatmen have been busy from daylight till dark, daily picking up and bringing in the bodies of the luckless passengers and crew of the *Brother Jonathan*. Parties from town patrol the coast for several miles north and south. Capt. Buckley, commanding at Camp Lincoln, has had two parties patrolling the beach ever since the disaster, one with its headquarters near the "Lagoon," about half way from here to the mouth of the Smith River, the other near the mouth of the Klamath. The whole coast is thoroughly patrolled every day.

Most of the bodies found have been brought to this place and decently buried. A few have been prepared for shipment to San Francisco. Some which could not be brought here have been buried where found. Nearly all [illegible] have been picked up [illegible]. They are [illegible] mutilated [illegible]. Most of them [illegible] unknown [illegible] recognized by papers found on their persons, or perhaps [illegible] friends [illegible] upon them. Mr. Nisbet's body was readily recognized by your correspondent and several other gentlemen. Papers and other articles which will be taken [illegible] by Mr. Kramer of the San Francisco police [illegible] beyond a doubt.

There is no doubt as to the [illegible] which I will send [illegible]. Where there was any doubt as to the name, the [illegible]. Mr. Kramer [illegible] the bodies of Mr. Nisbet, C.W. Pollock and D. Parrish, in metallic cases. They were each identified beyond a doubt. He will take them to San Francisco on the *Del Norte*. Mr. Kramer has been indefatigable in his efforts. Mr. [illegible], who lost two daughters and a grandchild, has also been very active but has not yet been rewarded by the discovery of any of his own dead.

This will go by the barque *Cambridge*. I cannot get a full list in time for her, but will send one by Monday's boat. The body of [illegible], of Gen. Wright's staff, has been recovered and decently buried by Captain Buckley.

Since the above letter was put in type we have received

[1] Literally, "Lamb of God," an amulet often worn by devout Catholics.

from J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City, agents of Wells Fargo & Co., who is now in this city, the subjoined complete list of the 27 bodies that had been recovered at that point up to Saturday last, the 12th instant. A private letter accompanying the list states that Mr. Nisbet's body was found floating seven miles at sea, with a life preserver attached. Following is the list, as written by the Coroner at Crescent City:

[Included were these *identified* bodies]:

Mr. Leach, U.S Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine.[1]

[Among the others:] Body Number No. 22-A: White woman...had one $1,000 Legal Tender note; five $20 do.; seven $10 do.; two $100 do.; five $50 do.; one $5 National currency note on the National Bank of Poughkeepsie, New York—in all $1,625. .

There are also buried between Gold Bluff and Trinidad about 16 bodies, of which we have not yet got a description. General Wright's horse, and a camel went ashore eight miles north of Trinidad.

Farther List of Bodies Recovered from the *Brother Jonathan*:

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

The *Oregon* [illegible] August 21, 1865, [illegible]

[illegible]

The *Alta California*, August 25, included these items:

[illegible]

An exceedingly rare $1,000 Legal Tender note of the type described. (Levitan Collection sold by Lyn Knight)

Crescent City, August 17th. To the Editor of the *Oregon Sentinel*:

"I was witness to the finding of a body of one of the passengers of the *Brother Jonathan* on the 15th instant, near Chetco, a few miles above the boundary line.... In his pocket we found...two small papers, much worn, and torn [and a $10 gold coin]. We also took from his finger a gold ring with the device of a double-heart, and inside of it was engraved the name "Irwin;" one of the papers was an inventory of men and women's clothing.... The only name on the list was one cloak, Catharine Irwin. . The other papers were folded in with other and were torn on the side and bottom; perfect on the top, and contained the annexed writing: "John B. Ferguson, Southeast corner of Howard and Thompson streets, Philadelphia, Co., John Irwin."

The following letter, received yesterday, needs no explanation:

"Crescent City, August 13th, 1865.

"Thomas Nisbet. Dear Sir: Among the papers found upon the body of your brother was a will written in lead pencil, evidently written after the ship struck. The will makes you sole executor. The document was discovered by myself and dried upon the stove at my place of business. I have it in my safe, and shall send it to you by Mr. Knower, a police officer of San Francisco, who is here. I have made a copy of it, and can, if necessary, identify the original. This I have done in case of any accident.

"I thought it proper to notify you of the facts contained herein so that you can secure the document immediately upon its arrival.

"Very respectfully, yours, Geo. W. Russell."

On the next day, August 26, the *Alta California* included this:

The steamer *Del Norte*, which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet, Esq., late Editor and part proprietor of the *Evening Bulletin*, of this city, Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil, who were among the victims of the terrible disaster of the *Brother Jonathan*.

[1] Related lists appeared in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 16, 1865 and *Alta California*, August 21, 1865.

[2] The only National Bank in that New York town to issue notes was the City National Bank of Poughkeepsie, charted on June 19, 1865, Charter No. 1305. Early notes on the bank (First Charter series) included 28,000 $5, 5,367 $10, 1,788 $20, 334 $50, and 334 $100. It would seem that the $5 note found on this body was among the very first issued by that institution.

[3] A.F. Miller of Chetco Creek held the body and later buried it. Miller also held the personal effects pending claims.

The funeral of Mr. Nisbet will take place tomorrow, at 12 o'clock, from Calvary Church, Bush Street. In addition to the list of bodies found, already published, we received the following by the *Del Norte*, buried at Gold Bluff and vicinity. [The bodies of Col. Cardiff and R.S. Manly; the remainder being unidentified.]

The *Oregonian*, August 26, 1865, printed this follow-up to its article of August 14 (earlier quoted):

The *Brother Jonathan* Disaster Again: The *Oregon State Journal* in its last issue takes occasion to say that it deems our strictures upon the conduct of those who ought to have sent relief to the survivors, if any, of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, quite too severe. The *Journal* can scarcely be acquainted with the facts. The statements which we made were given after due deliberation, and nothing has since transpired to make this case look different from the appearance it wore then. Every statement we made relative to the delay of the owners of the lost steamer in the matter of sending another vessel to the scene of the wreck, was perfectly in accordance with the facts, and any one with the proofs now at hand, can easily verify them.

Later advices than we then had, go to confirm the supposition or idea that several persons were surviving for some days on portions of the wreck. If so, it is not unlikely that they could have been saved, had aid been sent to them. Of the unseaworthiness of the steamer, it may be said that she was quite seriously injured by her collision with a vessel in the Columbia River but a few days before, and that when she started on her last trip, sufficient time had not elapsed to have had her thoroughly repaired.

We are fully persuaded that our judgment in the first instance was correct. For the sake of the owners of the steamer, we should be glad to have it shown that we were mistaken.

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 28, 1865, printed this account relating to Nisbet (excerpt):

The funeral service of the late James Nisbet of the *Bulletin*, who lost his life at the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* took place in Calvary Presbyterian Church yesterday afternoon....

The Last Moments of Mr. Nisbet:

As an appropriate appendix we give the following interesting statement, showing how Mr. Nisbet spent his last moments. We have heretofore stated that his will, evidently written at the time the *Brother Jonathan* was sinking, arrived in this city on Friday by the *Del Norte*. It covers the first and about one eighth of the second page of an ordinary sized sheet of note paper, and though written with a pencil, has not been at all defaced by the action of the salt water. Other documents found on his person were, however, considerably injured by the water, showing either that he had used those less important papers as wrappers to his will, or that he had deliberately calculated that pencil writing would be less liable to damage than if written with a pen and ink.

The following is a correct copy of the will:

"At Sea on Board the *Brother Jonathan*

"July 30, 1865:

"In view of death, I hereby appoint my brother, Thomas Nisbet at present engaged on the Pacific Railroad, near Clipper Gap, California, my sole executor, with instructions to wind up my whole estate, real and personal, and convert the same into cash, with all convenient speed, but so as not to sacrifice the same, and to pay over and divide the same equally between himself and my sole sister Margaret Nisbet, now residing in England; and under burden of the payment of a legacy of five thousand dollars in gold to Almira Hopkins, wife of Caspar T. Hopkins, Insurance Agent, San Francisco, Cal., and I desire that my brother, said Thomas Nisbet shall not be asked to give security for his intromission with my estate.

"Jas. Nisbet"

It is remarkable that notwithstanding the appalling circumstances under which this document was undoubtedly written, it is inscribed in the usual firm and distinct handwriting of the deceased, and even punctuated as accurately as if intended for "copy." On the third page of the sheet Mr. Nisbet wrote an affectionate letter to his brother, giving him the fewest possible words, a schedule of all his property, directing him as to his choice of an attorney, and sending a parting message to his only sister, to whom he was most tenderly attached.

Business thus being carefully attended to, and still a spare moment intervening before the fatal plunge, the fourth page of the sheet he devoted to the last sacred duty of friendship—a friendship all the more intense, because its strength was concentrated upon the very few that really knew the depth of feeling his strong, pure straightforward nature was capable of. These few hurried lines were addressed to the family of Mr. Hopkins, in which he had resided for several years, and whose children—though in no manner related to him—familiarly called him "Grandpa." They had begged him not to sail on Friday, especially on the "unlucky" *Brother Jonathan*. It was evidently in remembrance of their child-like apprehensions on his account that he wrote as follows:

"My Dear Ma [Almira Hopkins, a.k.a. Mrs. Caspar Hopkins]:

"A thousand affectionate adieus. You spoke of my sailing on Friday [illegible] *Jonathan*. Well here I am with death before me. My love to you all—to Sapo, to Belle, Millie and little Myra—kiss her for me.

"Never Forget

"Grandpa"

Mr. Nisbet was always fond of children. [illegible] Grandpa.

A Scandal is Suggested (August and September)

The following is from the nationally circulated *Harper's Weekly*, September 9, 1865, finally bringing readers news concerning the disaster, the delay having been caused by the breakdown of the telegraph link from San Francisco to New York:

WRECK OF THE "BROTHER JONATHAN."

The steamer *Brother Jonathan* struck a sunken rock off St. George's Point, near New Orleans [*sic*], at 1.30 p.m., July 30

Intelligence of the disaster reached this city August 26. The wreck was complete. All on board were lost except 17 passengers. Brigadier-General Wright and family were among those missing, though it is reported that when last seen the general had a life preserver in his hands. He should not be confounded with Major -General H.G. Wright.

The *Alta California* September 14, 1865, included this account of an honor, "A Deserved Reward," bestowed:

> Testimonial To Officer Knower:
>
> Special officer [J.G.] Knower, who left here on the receipt of the news of the loss of the *Brother Jonathan*, for the scene of the wreck, and spent some weeks in recovering the remains of the victims in many instances receiving no remuneration for his services, was yesterday the recipient of a magnificent testimonial at the hands of the friends of the deceased. It consists of a magnificent hunting-cased gold watch, Jules Jurgensen, maker, and solid gold chain. The watch bears the following inscription:
>
> "Testimonial to John G. Knower, in appreciation of valuable services in recovering bodies wrecked on the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, July 30th, 1865."
>
> The testimonial was well deserved and will doubtless be highly valued by the recipient.

However, there was another side to the story, the hint of a scandal. The same newspaper inserted this a month later on October 16:

> The following statement of facts connected with the rescue of the remains of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* disaster, [illegible] in a letter from [illegible] Crescent City [illegible] date of October 9th. [illegible]
>
> "[illegible] an article in a San Francisco paper of the 14th, headed 'A Deserved Reward,' [illegible] make a few comments. [illegible] Police Officer [illegible] *Brother Jonathan* [illegible]
>
> "[illegible] Mr. Knower [illegible] Crescent City [illegible]
>
> "The Coroner of Del Norte County, Mr. [illegible] Mason [illegible] Coroner, Del Norte County [illegible] and it was from this description taken by the coroner that Mr. Knower obtained all his information. It is very doubtful if Mr. Knower visited the cemetery at all during the time of interment of any of the victims of the unfortunate steamer. At all events, he had nothing to do with burying them, neither did it cost him anything.
>
> "He was allowed to take several bodies to San Francisco, he having shells for that purpose, as we are informed, furnished by Mr. Gray, the undertaker of San Francisco. Previous to the finding of Mr. Nisbet's body, Mr. Knower stated that whoever found it would receive $4,500, but when it was found he made himself very officious in taking upon himself the paying of us for finding the body, which was $150, with the understanding that we would get more when he got to San Francisco, that being all his available funds. If we had not been too poor we should have sent the body of Mr. Nisbet to his friends ourselves, without any reward.
>
> "Then again, he obtained the papers found on Mr. Nisbet's body, by requesting the coroner to let him dry them, which he did, but the coroner did not know at the time that Mr. Nisbet's will was amongst them, he taking but a casual glance at them, supposing Mr. Knower was a man of honor....
>
> "We have no objections to the friends of passengers on the unfortunate steamer making Mr. Knower, or any one else, presents, but we wish them to know what they are doing, and if they will have any spare change, to give it to parties more deserving.
>
> "For over two weeks after the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, we were constantly on the alert with boats, trying to render assistance. Some of us in endeavoring to get communication with Humboldt Bay, so that the tugboat might come up, were out three nights and two days in an open boat, 24 hours of the time without water, and had to put back on account of roughness of the weather.
>
> "For all our labor and use of boats, picking up bodies, etc., we have received $350, which, amongst some 20 boatmen, does not amount to much. Mr. Placer [actually Plass], a San Francisco [actually Napa] gentleman, who had two daughters lost on the ill fated steamer, was here at the time of Mr. Knower's visit, and used a great deal more exertion than Mr. Knower in recovering bodies, he being out for days at a time, up and down the coast, looking for them. If anyone doubts the truth of this statement, we refer them to him for information.
>
> "Hoping the papers will have the manliness to make the amend honorable, we are, respectfully,
>
> "Your obedient servants,
>
> "The Crescent City Boatmen."

Requiem

At the time, the *Brother Jonathan* disaster and the death of 200 or more people represented the greatest loss of life of any shipwreck on the Pacific Coast of the United States. In fact, it would hold this sorry record for a decade, until the loss of 288 aboard the *S.S. Pacific* off Cape Flattery, Washington, in 1875, the last remaining today as the most tragic non-military, peacetime shipwreck in the western coastal waters of the United States.

As with any disaster, tales of heroism were interleaved with accounts of greed, such as that related in the case of officer Knower.

Knower worked out of City Hall, San Francisco, and resided at 714 Folsom Street.

Ghouls cut off the fingers of many of the corpses that floated up on the beach, so that their rings could be recovered. Local authorities blamed these amputations on Indians in the area, but it was later disclosed that white citizens of the town had done it.[1] Many of the bodies were buried in the Brother Jonathan Memorial Cemetery, a part of the Masonic cemetery established in Crescent City about 10 years before the wreck.[2] Most of the passengers and nearly all of the cargo were never accounted for.

Fort Vancouver would be without its new general, the Territory of Washington was now governor-less, the northern region would have to get along without a bevy of seven ladies of the night and their madam, the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* columns would henceforth include no contributions by Editor Nisbet, and hundreds of other hopes, dreams, and schedules would have to be rearranged.

In time the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* would be largely forgotten. There was bigger news in 1865, primarily concerning the chaotic events after the Civil War, the bringing to justice of war criminals (such as Henry Wirz, the notorious commandant of the Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia), and even greater nautical disasters including the tragedy of the explosion of the *Sultana* on the Mississippi River the same year, in which about 1,600 were killed.

The Official Finding

In due course the accident was investigated by the government, and a "Report of Casualties and Violations of Steamboat Laws" was submitted in the First District. The "nature or casualty or violation" was described as "collision," and the action taken was described as "investigated." The number of lives lost was listed as "190." A transcript of the finding (from the National Archives) follows:

> On July 30, 1865, the steamship *Brother Jonathan*, bound from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon, was lost in a heavy sea by striking upon a sunken rock bearing about west north west from Crescent City, and from eight to 10 miles from land. She was a vessel of about 1,200 tons, and had on board when lost, as nearly as can be ascertained, 140 passengers and 50 other persons, being officers and crew; and about 500 tons of freight.
>
> She left San Francisco July 28, and experienced very heavy weather all the way up the coast. On the 30th, about 2 o'clock p.m., she was a little to the northward of Crescent City, and was passed at 12 M. [noon] by the steamship *Sierra Nevada*, bound down.[4] The sea was at this time so rough, and the wind blowing so heavy from the northwest, that it was determined by Captain DeWolf, who was in command of the steamer, to turn back and lie at Crescent City until the storm had abated.
>
> The steamer put about, and had run some 10 or 15 minutes to the southeast when she struck a sunken rock, and was so pierced by it that she remained lodged, and could not be backed off. The wind and sea were now beating very heavily on her port quarter, and she swung around and came head to the wind. It appears the rock must have been pointed or wedge-shaped, and when she came head to the wind it was found that in swinging it had burst open the bottom of the ship, and the foremast of the vessel slipped down through the opening until the foreyard lay across the deck.
>
> There was an immediate attempt made to get the lifeboats cleared from the sinking ship, and the first boat cleared and cast off, got away in safety with 19 persons on board; they were all the persons saved from the vessel out of 190. Several of the other boats were got into the water and loaded with passengers but were stove to pieces against the vessel by the force of the sea running along side. All the boats were lowered under direction of the officers, every person behaving in the coolest manner, under the assurance of the Captain that everything would be done for their safety which was possible.
>
> None of the principal officers even left the deck of the steamer, but when the lifeboats had been lost and all means of escape cut off, they were seen with the passengers then remaining on board, standing on the after deck of the vessel until she sunk beneath the waves, which she did in 45 minutes after striking the rock.
>
> During several succeeding days bodies were drifted on shore, all of which had life preservers secured to them, and many were recognized and taken possession of by their friends while others were buried where found by the force established to patrol the beach for more than 50 miles to the southward.
>
> It is not known with certainty whether the rock upon which the vessel struck has been previously known or not, as it is impossible now to determine the exact position of the steamer at the time, but it is generally believed it was further to sea than any rock or reef now laid down in the charts, and in support of this view it is hardly possible that a commander so experienced on this route, so constant in his watchfulness and so eminently correct in all his habits, could have run on any known danger in broad daylight, and the weather so clear that the position and bearings of the ship must have been fully known to him.
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* was rebuilt four years since and was a very staunch vessel, and was very fully supplied with boats and all other equipment required by law. She also had very able and experienced officers and a full crew. The public were very deeply impressed by this sad calamity, the ship and her officers having the fullest confidence of the people—there has not been [illegible] in the public press or elsewhere the least complaint against either, but everyone with a sense of personal bereavement in the loss of so many valuable and well known persons [illegible] submit to the [illegible] dispensation of an [illegible] Providence.

The official finding did not deter the publication of various revisionist accounts. In fact, it seems that many later writers for newspapers and magazines as well as a few authors of books did not bother to check facts, but drew upon stories published decades later. As an example, in 1894 in connection with a feature article and account of the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* the *San Francisco Chronicle* printed this:

[1] [illegible]

[2] [illegible]

[3] [illegible]

[4] [illegible]

> Mrs. S.J. DeWolf, widow of the captain of the lost steamer, is living in this city, at 1020 Leavenworth Street.[1] From her some of the facts relating to the loss of her husband's vessel were obtained. There is one point, however, upon which her statements are directly at variance with the accepted theory of the cause of the disaster. She is firmly convinced that the vessel struck no sunken rock, but that the accident was the direct result of overloading and of insufficient repairs from a collision that, she says, occurred between the *Brother Jonathan* and a schooner in the Columbia River on her down trip, and all his officers were aware of the condition of the vessel, but the owners refused to send her into dry dock at the time. It is Mrs. DeWolf's theory that a heavy quartz crusher which was on aboard became loosened and plunged through the weak part of the hull, causing the accident.

An Overview of the Tragedy

From the foregoing and other accounts and investigations, it seems that the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was a victim of circumstances. In high winds and raging seas she was unable to proceed northward on her planned course from Crescent City to Portland. Captain S.J. DeWolf wisely elected to return to the nearby port from which he had recently departed, and wait out the storm. Meanwhile, the passengers and crew could gain some much needed rest.

Consulting his charts, and being aware that the visibility was better offshore than close in, Captain S.J. DeWolf set a course distant from rocks and hazards. Unbeknownst to anyone, a massive rock projected upward from the ocean floor like a giant bayonet (as a writer for the *Oregonian* described it), with its tip just below the waves. No draftsman had ever charted it, no prior captain had ever reported its existence.

The ship had an experienced, capable crew and was on the popular and frequently traveled coastwise run past the northern reaches of California and the coast of Oregon. There were no unknown dangers along the well-charted route except the ever-changing weather. The vessel was equipped with enough life jackets and boats to accommodate at least 250, a number in excess of those aboard. Six lifeboats included four metal boats of the Francis Patent with flotation gear and two smaller boats suitable for going from ship, through surf, to shore.

The disastrous impact on the rock came instantly and without warning. Within three minutes, planks from the ship's bottom were floating nearby, and within five minutes, the rudder had broken loose and much of the fore part of the vessel had been torn apart. With little in the way of alternatives, Captain DeWolf said, "All hands aft, and try to save yourselves."

The first lifeboat was lowered from the forward port side and was immediately swamped, dumping everyone into the water, as the craft floated nearby bottom-up. No one survived.

The second lifeboat was lowered on the starboard side just aft of the giant wooden box that enclosed the paddlewheel. Under the direction of Second Mate J.D. Campbell, the craft was filled with ladies and perhaps some children as well, this in the finest tradition of seafaring. As the filled craft was being lowered from the davits on its lines, the steamer lurched heavily, slamming the lifeboat's bow into the side of the mother ship. Henry Allen, the first officer, was on deck nearby and hauled the passengers back on board, just as the boat broke loose of the ropes and crashed into the sea.

Meanwhile, according to one study,[3] Third Officer James Patterson helped five nearby women, three children, and an infant into one of the smaller wooden surf boats. Joining the group were David Farrell (steward for the steerage passengers), two firemen, two waiters, and four unidentified Portuguese seamen. Quartermaster Jacob Yates must have been in the boat, but nowhere is he found in contemporary accounts, and he was not one of the Portuguese seamen. First Officer Henry Allen, still on deck, lowered the boat from its davits to the water, but made no attempt to climb aboard. No sooner did the wooden craft reach the sea when the steamer hulk heeled over toward it, breaking off some of the thole pins (oarlocks) and nearly swamping the boat and its passengers.

As Patterson and his seamen did their best to row away from the *Brother Jonathan,* the women looked back and heard the report of two guns firing distress signals. About the same time, the smokestack came crashing down. It was later recalled that Captain DeWolf, another gentleman, and General and Mrs. Wright were standing at the rail of the hurricane deck, bravely and calmly awaiting their fate. Soon thereafter, the bow of the ship rose from its balance position on the rock, the stricken vessel floated free, the bow became submerged, and the hull of the *Brother Jonathan* slipped beneath the waves until only the tip of the stern was seen before it plunged to the bottom.

Under a bright but hazy sky the little surfboat was rowed past Battery Point and into the Crescent City harbor, while not a person on shore was aware that anything was amiss. According to one account, at 5:05 in the afternoon the survivors reached shore. The number of those saved was

[1] Marie F. DeWolf was a native of Roxbury, Massachusetts, and was born on December 23, 1819. In Fulton, Sonoma County, CA, on May 25, 1892, she penned her recollections and opinions concerning the shipwreck of 1865, many of which were fanciful or distant from reality; however, her ideas later secured a firm niche in the folklore of the ship. On March 5, 1906 Mrs. DeWolf died in San Francisco. Her service was held on March 7, at 3:30 p.m. at the Chapel of the Old Peoples' Home on the corner of Pine and Pierce streets.

[2] *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest,* which has many errors in its account of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* noted this (p. 132): "The steamer was poorly equipped with life-saving apparatus."

[3] DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered.* Also *Sacramento Daily Bee,* August 11, 1865 (which noted that the seamen earlier reported as Negro were in fact Portuguese).

variously reported as from 14 people upward, but may have been as many as 22 if various accounts are compared and matched.

An alarm was sounded, and within the hour four boats were dispatched toward the sea to aid in rescuing the others who, presumably, were floating in life jackets or in one of more small boats. Meanwhile, the wind and waves went from bad to worse, and the would-be rescuers were forced to turn back as soon as they reached the mouth of the harbor. It was not until two days later that a boat could draw near to the area where the steamer went down, and not until August 3rd that a search could be made. No one else was found alive. Afterward for several weeks, bodies and wreckage were found along the coast from Trinidad Head in California, along the shore northward past Crescent City to Cape Sebastian, Oregon.

Exactly how many survivors reached shore has been a matter of discussion for a long time. The true list, which may never be known, probably included most of the following:

Among crew members rescued from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* James Patterson, the third officer, was in charge of this small wooden surfboat, and to him was given most of the credit for saving the only people to reach shore alive. David Farrell, the steerage steward; Henry Miller, a baker in the ship's galley; firemen Patrick Lynn and William Lowery; and cabin boy Stephen Moran were among those saved, as were four unidentified "colored seamen" (Portuguese seamen). William E. Shields, a waiter, later gave testimony of the disaster as did helmsman Jacob Yates. A crewman named Sevener, described as a "comedian," was also among the survivors according to one account.

Among the passengers who survived, Mrs. Mary Ann Tweedale and her friend Mina Bernhardt were saved, along with Mrs. Bernhardt's child. Also surviving were Mrs. Martha Stott and her child. A Chinese woman named Mrs. Lee and her infant were saved. Martha E. Wilder, a teen-aged girl who apparently escaped with little or no clothing, was also among those saved.

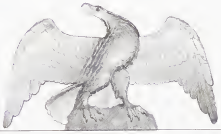
The preceding survivors include 13 crewmen and eight passengers, for a total of 21.

In Crescent City, Joseph Wall, long-time agent for Wells, Fargo & Co., provided valuable assistance to the survivors and aided in subsequent searches for bodies along the shore. Wall would remain in the service of Wells, Fargo for many years thereafter. Local fishermen expended much effort and recovered many corpses and other effects.

In August 1865, Eugene Russell penned words to a ballad, *The Sunken Rock: The Wreck of the "Brother Jonathan,"* and dedicated it to the California Volunteers—the Army personnel stationed near Crescent City—who had aided in the search.[1]

[1] Music by P.R. Nicholls. Published in San Francisco by Salvator Rosa, 617 Montgomery Street.

Chapter Fourteen



Legacy of the Brother Jonathan

Stories

In August 1865, when Eugene Russell wrote *The Sunken Rock: The Wreck of the "Brother Jonathan,"* he had no way of knowing that this would be an early entry in what would become a large corpus of remembrances, tributes, historical accounts, and adventure stories relating to the *Brother Jonathan.* The tragic loss of men, women, and children aboard the ship on August 30, 1865, touched a responsive nerve in many writers. While the *Brother Jonathan* was lost, she was not forgotten. The Bibliography lists many sources for information on the ship ranging from fanciful, embellished accounts to contemporary news stories.

Salvage Attempts

Many parts and artifacts from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* washed ashore during the weeks after the disaster. The ship's wheel was recovered along with a 40-foot section of the upper deck. For many years the wheel was displayed over the bar in Henry Saville's (or Scovill's) tavern in Crescent City. It was later purchased by Roy Clark, of Eugene, Oregon. By 1959 it was on view in the window of the Oregon Oyster House in Portland.

A gilded wooden eagle was taken from the deck wreckage, and today it is on view as an attraction in the Maritime Museum in San Francisco (a photograph of the eagle is reproduced with the heading of each chapter in the present book). The ship's bell came from the same source and was displayed at the old Crescent City lighthouse, until it was stolen in 1977.

Magnificently carved gilded wooden eagle from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* (Maritime Museum, San Francisco)

As is the rule, not the exception, with sunken treasures, little factual information has reached print concerning the salvage expeditions that have sought the *Brother Jonathan.* Often, operations were conducted in secret and the findings, if any, were not disclosed. In other instances, impressive pronouncements were made, but soon thereafter the record fell silent. At any given time there seem to have been multiple people in Crescent City who claimed to know the location of the wreck and who possessed other valuable information and whose expertise or consultancy could be obtained for a fee.

If any early treasure hunting group scored even a modest success or recovered even a single gold coin from the wreck site, such accomplishment is not known to the author. The dozens—some say *hundreds*—of attempts made during the 125 years after the ship's sinking all seem to have ended in failure.

Today the Del Norte County Museum in Crescent City preserves many utilitarian items from the ship, including wooden artifacts, china, bottles, and other items given to the museum by Deep Sea Research, Inc., beginning in 1995.

On the following pages a selected chronology of attempts is presented along with appropriate citations.

The *Mary Ann* (1865)

One of the earliest efforts to recover the treasure from the

vi SAN FRANCISCO DIRECTORY.

California Steam Navigation Co.

STEAMSHIP LINE.

FOR

PORTLAND, OREGON, & VICTORIA, V. I.

STEAMERS

PACIFIC AND ORIZABA

FOR

San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Pedro,

AND

SAN DIEGO,

STEAMER

SENATOR.

J. WHITNEY, Jr., President,

N. E. Cor. Front and Jackson Streets,

SAN FRANCISCO.

After the loss of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, the California Steam Navigation Company had a replacement steamer, the *S.S. Orizaba*, on the route to Portland and Victoria, joining the *Pacific*, which had been a sister ship to the ill-fated vessel. At an earlier time, Captain Samuel J. DeWolf, who went down with the *Brother Jonathan*, had commanded the *Orizaba* for a few trips. (Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1865-6*)

Brother Jonathan involved the steam tug *Mary Ann*, which left San Francisco on August 20, 1865. Although the little steamer prowled around the water off of Crescent City, nothing was found. Along the way she pulled up the anchor from the wrecked bark *Acadia* in Trinidad harbor to the south along the coast.[1]

William Ireland (1867)

In 1867 William Ireland conducted investigations near what he thought was the wreck site, but no success attended his efforts.[2]

Charles Hare Crew (1869)

In 1867 a crew aboard the schooner *Charles Hare* mounted a search for artifacts, but once again nothing of value was reported as having been found.[3] In the meantime, shopkeepers in Crescent City welcomed the treasure hunters and the hundreds if not thousands of dollars they spent locally for supplies and provisions. Already, the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy was a part of local tradition and lore, mixed with elements of fact.

A Corporate Effort (1872)

In 1872 the Brother Jonathan Treasure Company sold stock to help finance a search, the most impressive to date. Sophisticated equipment including diving bells was loaded aboard their new ship, the *S.S. Coquille.* There was much excitement and anticipation, but nothing of value was found.

Silas White in Danger (Circa 1875)

Silas White seems to have had enduring faith that the ship would be found, for he helped conduct several salvage attempts, including this one, circa 1875:[4]

> [Silas] White arrived at Crescent City about 10 years after the *Brother Jonathan* was wrecked. He tried experiments in locating the wreck, but lost his boat and equipment and nearly lost his life. He succeeded, however, in grappling a plank identified as part of the *Brother Jonathan's* paddle box. Finally White won the confidence and gratitude of an old Indian whose tribe had been encamped on the bay shore when the ship was wrecked. This Indian told White that because of a quarrel with the whites the Indians had sworn never to reveal the point where the *Brother Jonathan* went down.[5]

Capt. Gee Begins Annual Search (Circa 1877)

About this time Captain Peter Gee began what he later described as an annual summer search for the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* It was not until 1887 that he reported success. Whether Gee made his first effort seven years before 1887, or nine years before, or 10 years, depends upon which 1887 newspaper account you read (see entries under 1887).

Brother Jonathan Reported Found (1879)

The *Sacramento Union* August 5, 1879, carried an account which matter-of-factly stated that there was about a million dollars in treasure aboard:

> The Wreck of the Brother Jonathan; Nordenskjold's Expedition. San Francisco August 4th:
>
> Some parties in this city, who have been working up the matter for some time past, have discovered the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, which foundered off Point St. George, near Crescent City, in July 1865. She lies in an upright

[1] Don Marshall, *Oregon Shipwrecks*, 1984, p. 10.

[2] Don Marshall, "The Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, Myths and Misconceptions," 1993, p. 40.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Account published years later in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 1922 (excerpt from article quoted at length under 1922).

[5] There is no contemporary (circa 1865) evidence to indicate that local Indians had any specific knowledge of where the ship was sunk.

position in 22 fathoms of water, about 50 fathoms from the submerged rock on which she is supposed to have struck. There was about $1,000,000 in Treasury notes and bullion in her safe, and the finders are fitting out an expedition for its recovery. The treasure belongs to the government, whose claim, it is held, lapsed on the expiration of 10 years after the loss.

Wood & Hilliard (1880)

This was carried by the *Alta California,* October 7, 1887 (see full quotation under 1887):

> Captain Gee, the old sailor [reported in 1887 that his] "first attempt to locate the sunken steamer was made seven years ago, when Wood & Hilliard chartered a schooner and attempted to find the exact scene of the wreck. "But they got drunk," said the old sailor, "and of course did not succeed."

Overview (1881)

Anthony J. Bledsoe, whose history of the area was published in 1881, commented on the status of the wreck:[1]

> Several parties have at different times endeavored to find the sunken steamer, but have thus far been unsuccessful. Old Ocean keeps well its secrets, and it is probable that the lost steamer will forever be hidden from the eyes of man.
>
> A few articles from the wreck were recovered and are still preserved in Crescent City. The wheel (which was picked up on the beach a few days after the wreck) is in the possession of Peter Darby; also a bundle of papers which was picked up by one of the boatmen [in the search for bodies]....
>
> In the cemetery at Crescent City, a number of grassy mounds, with a decaying slab at the head of each, bearing the inscription:
>
> SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
> [name of victim]
> LOST ON THE BROTHER JONATHAN, JULY
> 30, A.D. 1865

Ship Found by Capt. Gee (1885)

This was carried by the *Alta California,* October 7, 1887 (see full quotation under 1887):

> Captain Gee, the old sailor [reported in 1887 that]: "Two years ago I succeeded in finding the vessel, but the fog came down and prevented us taking bearings, so that the next year I failed to find her."

Ship Found Once More (1887)

The *Alta California* October 2, 1887, printed this, however without any meaningful details:

> After Many Years, The Wreck of the Brother Jonathan Discovered at Last:
>
> A despatch from Crescent City, Oregon [*sic*], announces that Captain Gee, after 10 years' search has discovered the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, which sunk 22 years ago, after striking on an unknown rock. The wreck lies two miles south of Northwest Seal Rock, 18 miles northwest from Crescent City, on a rock not marked on any chart....

The *San Francisco Call,* October 7, 1887, printed this feature story:

> Treasure Trove Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* at Last Located. An Old Sea Captain after Nine Years' Weary Search Finds the Sunken Vessel and Hopes to Reap a Fortune:
>
> On Sunday, the 30th day of July, 1865, the steamer *Brother Jonathan,* while on a voyage from this port to Oregon, was wrecked off Point St. George, a short distance from Crescent City.... Since the wreck occurred, not a summer has passed but there have been parties searching for the wreck, as the vessel was known to have had a large amount of treasure on board, besides a valuable cargo of merchandise. Several times persons with but little experience thought they had found the wreck, and divers were engaged to go down for a confirmation of their belief, but their hopes were doomed to disappointment.
>
> Captain Peter Gee, an old retired shipmaster of this city who is well acquainted with the coast, came to the conclusion some years ago that he could find the wreck and gain a fortune from the sunken treasures contained therein. Yearly for the last nine years in the summer the captain has gone to Crescent City and fitted out boats to search for the wreck of the steamer. This year was no exception to the rule. He left here early last month and returned to the city on Monday feeling certain that he has at last located the position of the wreck, and if he can procure divers to go down he can secure the long hidden treasure and be recompensed for the thousands of dollars he has spent in searching for the treasure trove. In conversation with a *Call* reporter yesterday Captain Gee gave the following account of his search for the wreck:
>
> "For the last nine years I have every summer made a trip to Crescent City, where I have engaged boats' crews and made a search for the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*. Two years ago I found the wreck, but being thick weather I could not get my bearings and when I went out again from the shore I could not find it. I came down to the city and procured divers, but we could not find the location of the wreck and the divers never went down.
>
> "Last year I searched for a long time, but could not find it. I determined, however, not to give up after spending so much time and money, as long as I lived. This year I went searching again, leaving this city on the 11th of last month. On arriving at Crescent City I hired two boats and crews, pulled out to sea and commenced the search. We carried long lines, which were attached to the boats, and being weighted were sunk and swept along the bottom. After two days and a half succeeded in finding the vessel. She lies in [illegible] fathoms of water, about a mile to the westward and two miles south of Northwest Seal Rock, where the new lighthouse is being built. The spot is some miles northwest of Jonathan Rock, named so from the fact that it had been supposed by most persons that this was the place where the vessel went down. The rock where the *Brother Jonathan* struck is not down on the charts. There is [illegible] feet of water on it at high water and less at low water. The vessel now lies about 600 feet northwest from the rock. In sounding I found there was [illegible] fathoms of water on top of the wreck, and 37 fathoms on the side. The steamer evidently struck this hidden rock, which is known to the local boatmen as 'Saddle Rock,' and as she filled with water slid off and floated a short distance with the current before going to the bottom. I am positive, after all my pains, that I have at last succeeded in locating the wreck of the steamer.

[1] *History of Del Norte County, California, with a Business Directory and Traveler's Guide*, p. 83.

"As to what I shall get out of it I cannot say. A United States Army paymaster was on board the steamer with funds to pay off the troops up north, and I believe there was on board $700,000 in greenbacks[1] and a large amount in gold and silver coin. Whatever there is, I'm going to get it if possible. I have not placed any buoys over the wreck, but I have got the correct bearings and can go right to it."

After so many years of search for the wreck it is extremely doubtful if anything can be recovered or any intelligence gained as to its condition or what it contains. The vessel lies in about 200 feet of water. Since Captain Gee came down he has communicated with several divers here, but they all seem reluctant to explore at the depth mentioned. From 100 to 150 feet is as deep as any divers on this coast care to go down. The captain has, however, not given up hope that he will be able to yet employ divers who will go down and explore the wreck that he was so long in finding. There were over 300 passengers on board the ill-fated vessel at the time she went down. Forty-three bodies were recovered in the vicinity of Crescent City, and about a dozen more on the coast. There has been no evidence that the vessel has broken up, as no vestige of her hull has ever come on the beach.

This related account was carried by the *Alta California*, October 7, 1887, and suggested that $2,000,000 in treasure was aboard:

> The *Brother Jonathan*. The Sunken Wreck Finally Located by Captain Gee.
>
> Captain Gee, the old sailor who recently discovered the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan*, which was lost on July 30, 1865, on a reef off Crescent City, was seen yesterday by an Alta reporter. Captain Gee's first attempt to locate the sunken steamer was made seventeen years ago, when Wood & Hillard chartered a schooner and attempted to find the exact scene of the wreck. "But they got drunk," said the old sailor, "and of course did not succeed. Afterwards, every summer, I attempted to find the vessel. I took two boats, each with two men, and [illegible] with lead, dragged for four or five miles up that portion of the coast. Two years ago I succeeded in finding the vessel, but the fog came down and prevented us taking bearings, so that the next year I failed to find her.
>
> "Last September, however, I returned to the search, and after dragging [illegible] for two and a half days came across the wreck, which lies in 35 fathoms of water about two miles south of Northwest Seal Rock, and two miles northwest of Jonathan Rock, which was called after the wreck. The wreck lies about 600 feet from Saddle Rock, which is not laid down in the charts, but is well known to fishermen. At low water there is about four feet of water on the rock, and at high tide 10 feet. She had evidently struck the rock and slid off into deep water."
>
> "Do you expect to get much treasure?" asked the reporter.
>
> "Well, I don't know. It is thought there was $2,000,000 on board, and I believe $700,000 was in greenbacks. At any rate I am going to try, though it is hard work getting divers. They don't like going down more than 20 fathoms; the strain is too great."

A Secret Expedition (1890)

The *Del Norte Record*, August 9, 1890, included this account picked up from the *San Francisco Post* edition of July 21. Captain-capitalist Gee was active again:

> Out For Stuff. The Secret Mission of the Schooner *Mary E. Anderson*.
>
> A week ago last Thursday the schooner *Mary E. Anderson* left port for Crescent City. For about a week before that she had been fitting out at Howard Street wharf, No. 1, and the greatest secrecy was observed with regard to her movements and those on board of her. A *Post* reporter accidentally tumbled over the destination of the little schooner last Thursday morning while roaming about the waterfront in search of a news item.
>
> The *Mary E. Anderson* is a schooner of 31 tons, and is owned by H. Crockard and Sons, the shipsmiths at 216 Stewart Street. Her captain was formerly Hobbs, but on this trip he was left [behind when she went] on a voyage of treasure seeking. The treasure trove is supposed to be lying at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean in the wreck of the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan*, which was lost many years ago off the coast, somewhere in the vicinity of Crescent City.
>
> The expedition has been gotten up by Peter Gee, a well-known capitalist[2] of this city, and he and the Crockards are in on shares on the result of the enterprise. Considerable expense has gone into fitting out the schooner, about $2,000 having been already laid out. Two divers and a complete diving apparatus was engaged, and everything in fact necessary for the expedition in case the golden hopes of capitalist Gee are realized. Provisions were put on board in quantities enough to provide for the wants of the crew of a large ship., Captain Gee took along two boxes of syndicate beer for his own use.
>
> The *Brother Jonathan* plied between this port and north until she was lost about 14 [*sic*] years ago. She was bound hence from Victoria, and her commander, Captain DeWolf and a large number of her passengers perished with her. It was known she had considerable money on board and several expeditions similar to that of the *Mary E. Anderson* have been made, but the position of the wreck has never been located. Gee has made several trips to the scene, all of which have been unsuccessful. He says now that he has located the spot and will recover the treasure, which amounts to about $2,000,000. The treasure is mostly in gold coin and currency; the gold being packed in iron boxes, and the currency encased in canvas bags covered with oil skins.[3]
>
> Should the present expedition prove successful, Mr. Gee will send to the city and arrange for better facilities for the safe removal of the money to the city. *S.F. Post*, July 21.

Status Report (1891)

The *San Francisco Call*, March 29, 1891, included a brief summary of the tragedy, which seems to indicate that the riddle of the *Brother Jonathan* had not been solved:

> Once loosened from the rock the hull of the *Brother Jonathan* sunk in some 25 fathoms of water, but no trace of her has ever been found, notwithstanding the several searches made.

---

[1] This reveals that Gee had not read 1865 newspaper accounts of the wreck, or if he did, he did not remember correctly; there was $200,000—not $700,000—in Legal Tender notes aboard in the government shipment.

[2] Now earlier he had been reported as being a *captain*, now he is a *capitalist*. Thus we have captain capitalist Gee.

[3] The article in the *Del Norte Record* continued with a version of what happened on the fateful day July 30, 1865 (this part of the article is reprinted earlier in the present text).

Ryan Claims Success (1894)

In 1894 the *Brother Jonathan* was in the news again. By this time the disaster of some 29 years earlier had been forgotten by most and was unknown to still others, many of whom had not been born in 1865. An account told of the finding of the wreck. Seemingly, here was success at last! The *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 8, 1894, informed its readers:

> Wreck and Treasure—Finding of the *Brother Jonathan*—Diver Ryan Tells a Strange Story—Material Evidence Brought Up From the Depths of the Ocean.
>
> If the story told by diver John F. Ryan be correct the wreck of the ill-starred *Brother Jonathan* has been found at last after almost 30 years, in which time a dozen parties have sought systematically for the sunken hull. If Diver Ryan's belief is well grounded, there is also a probability that something like $1,000,000 in gold will soon be recovered from the wreck....
>
> Diver Ryan's declaration that he has visited the submarine grave of the unfortunate steamer is supported by material evidence in the shape of the ship's bucket, marked in brass letters with the words *Brother Jonathan*, and various other small relics that undoubtedly came from some part of the steamer.
>
> Besides the bucket these include three brass buttons and a piece of cloth, which, the diver says, came originally from the body of one of the military passengers, possibly a member of the party of Brigadier-General George H. Wright, who was a victim of the disaster....
>
> [Ryan] holds the record as a deep-sea diver, having descended hundreds of feet by means of submarine armor, invented by himself, where ordinary divers have only gone fathoms. A certificate from Captain James Colston, chief of the Divers' Union of New York, designates him "the champion of the world as a deep-sea diver" in his iron-plated armor diving dress, and speaks of his descent to a depth of 640 feet and of his remaining down for over three hours....
>
> A *Chronicle* reporter met the diver and found him extremely reluctant at first to give any information concerning his find, but he was finally persuaded to give some details:
>
> "Several years ago, while master of a steamer on Puget Sound, an old man named G.W. Hill, hearing that I was a submarine diver, told me he was assistant engineer of the *Brother Jonathan* when she foundered, and was one of the 19 survivors of the wreck.[1] He said, he could take me to the scene of the wreck, and was sure he could locate the exact spot where she went down. His yarn interested me, of course, but I was thinking of other matters in those days, and didn't care to go hunting for lost treasure....
>
> "A few months ago he came to me again in Seattle and said he would take me to the place if I would give him $200 in case he located the ship. If we didn't find her, I would not have to give him more than his traveling expenses. Well, after thinking it over and getting all the information I could concerning the wreck, and satisfying myself that there was a great amount of money in her. I told Hill I would take him up. We soon reached the vicinity of the place where the ship was seen to go down, and located her in several hundred feet of water in an amazingly short period of time. Of course the precise location of the wreck is my secret....
>
> "The *Brother Jonathan*...is in fine condition, and I hope to raise her to the surface. I was down to the vessel, walked across her deck and felt my way all around her hull. She lies at such a depth, however, that there was not enough light for me to see at all, and I had to feel my way wherever I went. I was groping on the bottom in hopes of getting some trace of the wreck when, suddenly, I was surprised to find my way barred by a solid surface. I thought at first I had encountered a big rock, but soon discovered that it was the hull of a wrecked vessel. At this moment I felt something touching me at different parts of my armored suit, which was followed by a huge body, which proved to be a shark, slowly passing between me and the ship. Of course, I was protected by my armored suit and had no need to fear him.
>
> "But to return to the story of the wreck: After convincing myself that I had located the ship I had come so far to find I felt my way along the hull and passed clear around the ship. Then I raised myself and got on deck. Taking one or two steps I fell about half my length into a hole of some kind. This made me nervous, for I was in great danger of getting some of my air tubes out of order. Before I straightened myself up, however, I took hold of an article of some kind, I had kicked loose in my fall, and which later proved to be the ship's bucket. I then crawled along the deck a few feet and found a piece of cloth and the other articles mentioned and soon after signaled to the boat above for ascending and in a few minutes was in the fresh air again. ..
>
> "From what I can learn the gold that sunk with the wreck was locked up in different parts of the ship. With the aid of a light I think I can locate the treasure. If not I will at once proceed to raise the hull to the surface of the water. The vessel being in good condition, and as staunch as the day she sank, I intend to make four collapsible airbags to do the work. It may take more of them, but I'm quite sure they will do it...."

Despite the publicity given to world champion deep-sea diver Ryan in 1894, it is not known what, if anything, was later recovered in the way of coins or other treasure. The hull was not raised, and in time its location was forgotten if, indeed, it had ever been found.

Status Update (1895)

Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest, 1895, contained much incorrect information about the ship. Unfortunately, this book seems to have been the main source consulted by certain later writers. However, the following seems to be factual, except for the dollar amount of the property.

> The *Brother Jonathan* had a considerable sum of money on board to be used in paying the troops in the Northwest, and from this fact have sprung a great number of wild tales of fabulous wealth supposed to have gone to the bottom with the vessel. In some cases the amount has been stated at over a million dollars, while as a matter of fact the property lost by the wreck was only about $250,000 all told, much of it in [illegible] which contact with water would render worthless.

[1] In archival research in connection with this project, neither the author nor Dan Owens has found any contemporary (1865) mention of a G.W. Hill, assistant engineer, listed on the *Brother Jonathan* crew, nor was any mention of him made among names of survivors (which the 1894 Hill claims to have been). The August 3, 1865, issues of *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* gave Hugh Mott as chief engineer, C. White as first assistant engineer, and J. Francis second assistant engineer.

Nevertheless, many expeditions have been undertaken at expense of much time and money in the endeavor to ascertain the position of the wreck with a view to recovering the treasure, and hardly a year passes but some new story is given the public to the effect that the long-sought steamer has finally been definitely located; but up to the present time the exact resting place of the unfortunate craft still remains one of the mysteries of the deep.

Treasure in "Lead-Sealed Caskets" (1913)

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 20, 1913, included this:

After Jonathan's Gold: Another expedition is seeking to recover the $1,000,000 in gold which went down with the old sidewheel coaster *Brother Jonathan*, which foundered off Point St. George on the northern coast in the ancient year of 1864 [*sic*].

Undeterred by the failure of other treasure seekers, a party organized in this city is now sounding for the wreck in the hope of locating and bringing to the surface some of the lead sealed caskets containing the treasure. The salvage gear, which included a launch and diving apparatus, was taken north on the steam schooner *Del Norte*."

Canadian Government (1914)

The following report gives a new slant on the treasure of the ship:[1]

In 1914 the Canadian government sent a salvage vessel to Point St. George to locate the *Brother Jonathan* and salvage their gold.[2] For two months divers searched the area around Jonathan Rock, which lies one and a half miles from the beach. But currents which prevailed around this rock hindered the vessel's divers. The Canadians finally called off the search as too expensive, and their final report was that the ship broke up and was swept away.

Tio Francisco Finds an Artifact (1914)

In 1914 Tio Francisco, an old fisherman of Crescent City, "recovered a railroad rail, part of the cargo of the sunken sidewheeler," and ascertained the position of the wreck.[3]

Silas White (1915)

The Crescent City Triplicate, April 2, 1915, included this item concerning a treasure seeker who had been interested in the wreck as early as circa 1875 (see earlier account):

Silas White reports that he expects a party of divers here to dive for the hull of the *Brother Jonathan*. Silas has an abiding faith in his hunch that he knows where the old hulk is located.

Lund and Freese Find the Ship (July 30, 1915)

The *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1916, included this (an excerpt from the story given in full under 1916, below):

In July of last year [1915] Lund and Freese took an expedition to Crescent City to make a preliminary search for the treasure. Lund located the vessel just 50 years to the day after it sunk, an air chamber from a deck pump, pieces of copper contained in the cargo and other parts of the ship, all encrusted with a marine growth and pebble stones four inches thick, proving the fact of his discovery. These articles are now in possession of Freese.

The Lund-Freese-Francisco Expedition (1916)

The *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1916, included this story, including some fanciful information about the disaster and recovery of bodies:

$2,000,000 Gold Hunt Begins. Floor of Sea Will Be Combed:

A mystery in treasure-trove which has gripped shipping circles of the Pacific Coast for more than 50 years past, supplying an incentive for get-rich quick promoters, crystal seers, clairvoyants and explorers of the sea, now seems on the verge of being solved.

Martin Lund, a diver of world wide renown, leaves today on the steamer *Del Norte* for Crescent City to salvage the wreck of the old sidewheeler *Brother Jonathan*, which has laid off the coast of Del Norte County for half a century past with a cargo of more than $2,000,000 in specie, government bills and other valuables.

J.C. Freese, marine contractor at Third and Berry streets, is associated with Lund in financing and equipping the expedition. Tio Francisco, a hermit fisherman 73 years old who has been a romantic figure on the coast in the vicinity of Crescent City for the last 25 years, is the third member of the party. Francisco, two years ago, recovered a railroad rail, part of the cargo of the sunken sidewheeler, and from the information furnished by him Lund was able to definitely locate the position of the wreck.

In July of last year Lund and Freese took an expedition to Crescent City to make a preliminary search for the treasure. Lund located the vessel just 50 years to the day after it sunk, an air chamber from a deck pump, pieces of copper contained in the cargo and other parts of the ship, all encrusted with a marine growth and pebble stones four inches thick, proving the fact of his discovery. These articles are now in possession of Freese.

After three weeks of diving and preliminary planning, the expedition was delayed until this year. The vessel is lying in about 45 feet of water.[4] It is just off a jutting reef to the north of Crescent City. Numerous expeditions formed in the past to recover the treasure have failed. The last of consequence was financed by Peter Gee, a retired sea captain. Captain Thomas P.H. Whitelaw the wrecker undertook the work. It is said $10,000 was expended on this fruitless venture.

The *Brother Jonathan* sunk the night of July 30, 1865. It left San Francisco with a cargo of money, copper, whiskey and the first steel railroad rails to be shipped into the Northwest.[5]

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[1] Item in the Deep Sea Research, Inc., files attributed as "from University of Oklahoma Press, Spring 1967."

[2] No record has been located of any gold aboard that belonged to the government of Canada; besides, Canada was not formed until 1867. British Columbia was a separate entity in 1865.

[3] The *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1916, quoted more extensively below (under 1916).

[4] Obviously, whatever this ship was, it was not the *Brother Jonathan*.

[5] Copper, whiskey, and railroad ties are not listed in any contemporary (circa 1865) account seen by the author; however, such are given in several *twentieth-century* narratives.

She was a sidewheeler, owned by the California Steam Navigation Company and in charge of Captain DeWolf. A vessel about 230 feet in length, she had a beam of 35 feet and drew 16 feet of water. Her passenger list was full [*sic;* actually, she was two-thirds empty], and, with the crew, carried 250 souls when she hit. Three days later 182 of the bodies were recovered in a kelp bed in a small sheltered cove off Castle Rock.[1]

The people of Crescent City held a public burial, setting apart an elevated tract above the town for the graves of the dead. To this day it is known as Brother Jonathan Cemetery. Martin Lund is known all over the world for his feats of diving. He is 49 years of age and has been following the business since a boy of 14. He gained fame through his work for the government in blowing out the coral reefs in Pearl Harbor. The hermit, Tio Francisco, who apprised Lund of his discovery, is an Austrian. He is a recluse by choice. It was while pulling in one of his fishing nets that he came upon the iron rail.

Lund Tries Again (1917)

The *San Francisco Chronicle* June 12, 1917, related the latest events in the ongoing search, to this point unfruitful:

> Expedition off to raise sunken treasure ship—Gold bars in hull of long-lost *Brother Jonathan* lure S.F. men—Preparations guarded—Secrecy surrounded outfitting of freighter with wreckers' apparatus.—In quest of treasure.—Gold bars stored away in the submerged hull of the long lost *Brother Jonathan*, which was wrecked off the Mendocino coast many years ago:
>
> Martin Lund, a diver and eight men, were towed to sea Saturday in Lund's 40-ton gasoline freighter, the *President*. For three days prior to his departure Lund, and his associates were busy outfitting at Sausalito, and guarded their secret as closely as possible.
>
> Fortune In Gold Bars Locked In Strong Boxes:
>
> Tackle, equipment and supplies, together with the machinery necessary to salvage the bullion bars, were loaded aboard the freighter. No information was given to seekers, and Saturday morning a steam schooner drew up to the *President* and steamed out the north channel, the Lund expedition in tow. However, it became known today that the prize is the lost *Brother Jonathan*. For many years it has been credited as a total loss. When the ship was wrecked she was south-bound [*sic!*] from the northern gold country with a fortune in her strong boxes. The exact position of the vessel has remained a matter of speculation. Lund confided that he had the proper position and was off for the fortune hunt.
>
> Crew Share In Recovered Bullion:
>
> Lund has been associated with J.C. Freese and has had some success in salvage work. He knows the coast waters and hinted that the *Brother Jonathan* was only one of three possible objectives. The large quantity of supplies and the heavy equipment attracted much attention as it was being taken aboard. It is thought that some of the crew are in on Lund's secret and are to share in the recovery of the bullion if success crowns the effort.

More appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 1917:

> [Letter to the] Editor, the *Chronicle*:
>
> Sir:
>
> I saw in today's paper where a man named Martin Lund is after the *Brother Jonathan* treasure. If he knows no more about it than is published in today's paper he does not know much. The *Brother Jonathan* was wrecked on St. George reef, seven or eight miles north of Crescent City, nowhere near Mendocino.
>
> I walked the beach where she was wrecked all night in company with others, to help any survivor in case they came ashore. Instead of coming from the north she was going to Portland. She had General Wright and staff aboard and the treasure consisted of $1,000,000 [*sic*] in greenbacks in an iron safe. It is all nonsense about gold bars. I rode to Jacksonville, Oregon, next day with a dispatch to the Army authorities telling of the wreck and the loss of the general and his staff. So I know as much as any man that was in that section of the country.
>
> Geo. M. Currier.
>
> Gustine, June 12, 1917

The Mansfield Effort Planned (1921)

The *San Francisco Chronicle,* October 25, 1921, told of another recovery attempt, now featuring a newly publicized "treasure," whiskey:[2]

> Divers Will Seek Vast Fortune Off California Coast.—$1,000,000 in Gold and 364 Barrels of Whiskey Believed Located.
>
> Three hundred and sixty four barrels of real whiskey and $1,000,000 in gold is the object for a new treasure hunt off the northern California coast, according to F.B. Mansfield of Berkeley. Mansfield says the treasure constituted the cargo of the *Brother Jonathan*, which went down on a reef off Crescent City July 30, 1865.
>
> Mansfield, founder of South Milwaukee, heard of the treasure this summer from Silas White of Crescent City, while Mansfield was on a trip through that part of the state. Immediately he took steps to salvage it. According to Mansfield the treasure has been located by means of gold-finding instruments employed by gold miners.[3] W.G. Smith of Milwaukee has been interested in the scheme of recovery, and is said to have shipped to the coast a huge bell with divers' paraphernalia to use in the work of salvage.
>
> Mansfield says he is satisfied the gold is intact, but the present condition of the 364 barrels of liquor is a matter for speculation. Whether the wooden barrels have withstood the salt water during their long immersion, or whether the contents have gone to the fishes long before this, is a matter that can only be settled when a diver investigates, says Mansfield.

Mansfield Ready to Start (1922)

Hope continued to spring eternal, and the next year the *San Francisco Examiner* printed this, edition of February 8, 1922:

> $1,000,000 Gold Sought in Sea
>
> Eureka, Feb. 7.
>
> Salvage work is about to be resumed near Crescent City on the ancient wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, sunk July 30, 1865 with a loss of 181 lives, one million dollars in bullion and 365

[1] This is "new" news to anyone studying *Brother Jonathan* lore.
[2] Nationwide Prohibition had taken effect in 1920 (and would continue until 1933); thus whiskey would have seemed like a "treasure" in 1921.
[3] The nature of this marvelous instrument was not detailed.

barrels of whiskey.[1] The wreck is said to have been positively located by Silas White of Crescent City, who has remained a steadfast believer in the feasibility of its ultimate salvage, and the recovery of the bullion.

Last summer, while spending a vacation in Crescent City, F.B. Mansfield of Los Angeles became acquainted with White and his scheme for salvaging the bullion from the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* off Point St. George, and later, upon his return to Los Angeles, Mansfield interested M.D. Kelly of Milwaukee, in the salvage plan, with the result, according to the Crescent City report, that a deep sea diver of experience has been engaged for the work of salvage and a 2,000-pound diving bell, equipped with an air tank which will enable the diver to remain under water for eight hours at a time, is now on the way to the scene of operations. The hunt for lost treasure will begin early this spring.

The *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 14, 1922, gave more details:

Divers To Seek Millions Lost In 1865 Wreck—Bullion, 346 Bbs. of Liquor, Goal of Eureka Treasure Hunters.

Eureka, March 13:

A treasure hunt has been launched here for $2,000,000 in gold and silver that has been lying on the floor of the Pacific since the sidewheeler *Brother Jonathan* was wrecked on the treacherous coast of Pelican Bay 56 years ago. In addition to the treasure, the ship carried 346 [*sic*] barrels of whiskey. [illegible]

To Use Diving Bell

[illegible]

The *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 15, 1922, brought readers up to date, complete with new information that there was $2,000,000 in gold aboard:

Sunken Treasure After 56 Years Whiskey Lures Searchers to Gold-laden Wreck

For 56 years $2,000,000 in gold has lain in the wreck of the Brother Jonathan in Pelican Bay without tempting searchers. But now that it has transpired that 346 barrels of whiskey went down with the craft Pelican Bay will be covered with wrecking boats.

Two More Attempts (1926)

In this year there were two expeditions to the site, but both failed to discover anything of value.[3]

Moorman's Effort (1927)

The *New York Times,* May 25, 1927, carried this account datelined San Diego, May 24:

Naval divers from San Diego will proceed with full equipment to Crescent City, Cal., this summer and attempt to recover $850,000 in gold, part of an army payroll, lost on July 30, 1865, when one of the Pacific's ghastliest tragedies occurred, the foundering of the steamship *Brother Jonathan,* with the loss of 200 lives, passengers and crew.

Following conferences between naval officers at San Diego and Frank L. Moorman, Pacific Coast capitalist, the expedition was announced by the latter, together with a list of commodities and valuable papers which will be sought. The government is interested primarily in the payroll and in Civil War records which may clear up many pension cases brought before Congress in years gone by.

Only the development of highly sophisticated diving and submarine recovery methods brought the decision to work on the wreck, the position of which has been located. The vessel foundered in a terrific gale, her cargo carrying her immediately to the bottom before too great a breakup could ensue.

If the expedition in its final form assumes an official aspect, the treasure will be returned to the government, but if present plans materialize, the expedition will be unofficial and the members will divide the gold among themselves.

A Busy Treasure-Hunting Year (1931)

The following Lighthouse Service Department report, August 15, 1931, was in response to an inquiry from J.O. Becker, of the Crescent City lighthouse, August 9, in which he noted that the wreck was being investigated by the *Jannette R.* (also given as the *Jeannette R.* in accounts), but the explorations were not visible from the lighthouse:

Referring to letter of August 5 about the steamer *Brother Jonathan* wreck: wrecking party consisting of a launch and diver is at Crescent City. When returning from Crescent City station, [our] launch observed [that a] boat [had] moved in close to Point St. George searching for the wreck. I understand that up to date they only discovered a paddlewheel from the steamer. When launch arrives at Crescent City will inquire for information and let you know the result of the findings. Keeper of the Crescent City lighthouse will be more able to furnish you information regarding the activities of wrecker.

Another Lighthouse Service Department report, August 19, 1931, included this update:

1 The number of whiskey barrels grows in the telling; the preceding year it was 364.

2 Now we have new information concerning the ethnic composition of the passengers! Story by story, the *Brother Jonathan* legend grows.

3 Don Marshall, "The Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, Myths and Misconceptions," 1993, p. 40.

The *Brother Jonathan* wreck hunting steamer *Jannette R.* from Los Angeles sailed south Thursday evening, August 13th. The steamer was used for several months in searching for the long lost steamer *Brother Jonathan* wrecked on St. George's Reef in 1865. Search was unsuccessful.

The *Crescent City Triplicate*, September 11, 1931, printed the following:

The *Brother Jonathan* is again being sought.... George Ennis of Los Angeles arrived in Crescent City again on Friday evening in company with D.G. Turnbull, also of Los Angeles. Ennis was in this city during the later part of June and had the Crescent City fishing boat leased for the purpose of salvaging for the *Jonathan*.

During the first of July the Shlaudaman-Parks expedition arrived with their salvaging boat the *Jeannette R.*, and shortly afterwards Ennis left stating that when the Shlaudaman expedition left he would return to resume his work.

It was rumored that Ennis had discovered the wreckage before he left, but would do nothing until the Shlaudaman Parks expedition left, which it did in the middle of August.

The diver off the *Jeannette R.* remained in Crescent City when the remainder of the party left, and gave as his reason that he had been hired by another party. The diver claimed also that he was confident of finding the treasure if there was any, as the bottom of the ocean is very hard around the location, but it was his opinion that the hull had gone to pieces and was scattered. He stated that they had found one piece of the wreckage, but he had no way of identifying it to be the *Brother Jonathan*.

Some of the old timers in Crescent City and Del Norte County claim that the money that is said to have been on the *Jonathan* when it went down was paper money and that cartons held it. If this is the truth, the treasure seekers will probably be very much disappointed when they come upon the chest; but no one has any definite way of knowing how much was actually on the boat or what shape the money was in.

The *Crescent City Triplicate*, October 9, 1931, included this information:

Operations directed at salvaging a part of the cargo of the ancient steamship *Brother Jonathan*, carried on during the recent summer, off Castle Rock near the city, thus far have resulted in no reward for the thousands of dollars poured into the work by two rival expeditions.

The operations, however, have received such widespread publicity and so much attention along the entire Pacific Coast that the Marine Division of the U.S. Customs Service, Treasury Department, has recently issued a bulletin of information, compiled from newspaper and marine reports on the tragedy which occurred more than 66 years ago. The reports, gathered from musty shipping records and yellow newspaper files, were consolidated into a "communique" by N.S. Farley, deputy collector of customs from San Francisco.... So far as he can determine, Farley states, reports that the ship carried large amounts of gold bullion are incorrect. He also doubts that the wreck has been located, inasmuch as it probably would be out in the rough waters of the ocean where it would be impossible for the divers to go down....

The report of the collector also contains extracts from stories carried in the *San Francisco Ocean Trade*, the San Francisco Directory, the *Press Dispatch*, and a number of telegrams to marine headquarters from survivors and rescue parties.

The *Crescent City Triplicate*, December 18, 1931, printed this under title of "File Salvage Claim on Sunken Vessel Off Crescent City":

A declaration by M. Paulson and Associates in re: a salvage claim was filed this week in the County Recorder's office, the first of its kind ever to be filed here. Paulson and his associates believe they have located a vessel lying on the bottom of the Pacific Ocean in about 25 fathoms of water. According to the documents filed they claim all store, cargo, equipment and all contents...which they will begin salvaging in the near future. The name of the vessel is not mentioned, but from reports around the city, the men are seeking the "supposed million" of the *Brother Jonathan*, that sank off the coast of Crescent City in the year 1865.

The *Brother Jonathan*, as the story goes, carried between three and four hundred thousand dollars to pay off the soldiers of Uncle Sam, stationed at various army posts along the Pacific Coast and northwestern states. Various enterprises have contemplated and attempted the salvaging of the craft, and much interest was manifested when the *Jannette R.*, a fully equipped boat, carrying a crew and a diver or two made a number of attempts to locate the *Brother Jonathan* last summer, but gave the task up as hopeless, after a search of five or six weeks.

Search by Barge (1933)

The *Crescent City Triplicate*, September 29, 1933, reported this:

A small barge equipped with winches for handling diving apparatus has been anchored in the harbor here for the past week or more. It is reported the crew is engaged in a search for the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, ill-fated treasure ship which is believed to have foundered on the Point St. George Reef.

Whiskey Comes Ashore (1942)

An account, "Notable Happenings," included this:[1]

In 1942, after another storm had hit hard on St. George Reef, 35 to 40 kegs of whiskey came to the surface and floated onto shore. There were 346 barrels (mostly 100% kegs) listed on the manifest. These 35 to 40 kegs were seen on the beach from all around Point St. George and as far south as Battery Point.

The Sheriff's Department began confiscating all the kegs except six kegs that were picked up by two men and rolled up the embankment in front of Pebble Street and buried. The confiscated kegs were never seen again. The barrels of whiskey were stored in the forward hold of the ship. We currently have a lead on the six kegs that were buried and have a man in Crescent City pursuing the goal of locating and uncovering them.

Musings about the Ship (1946)

In an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 29, 1946, feature writer Robert O'Brien in his "Riptides" col-

[1] DSR, S.S. *Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*. This unsigned account seems to have been prepared by someone in the 1980s.

umn commented, "A former Army flyer named Captain Barbee telephoned and said he had a machine that could locate buried treasures, and he wanted to know if I had any idea where I could find one."

O'Brien wrote that a few days later, while at the Mechanics Library in town, he came across a book (title not stated) with the story of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* which he proceeded to sketch in his article. Then, "later in the week, Captain Barbee called again. I told him about the fortune that had sunk with her. He appreciated knowing about it, but said his machine couldn't locate any treasure that was underwater."

Victims Honored (1955)

In 1955 the Del Norte County Historical Society registered the Brother Jonathan Cemetery as a State Historical Landmark (No. 541), with the plaque mistakenly stating that the ship had belonged to the Pacific Mail Steamship Line. However, the honor was a short-lived one. The site became overgrown with weeds and brush, and later it was completely desecrated.

Cemetery Desecrated (1959)

A superb study by Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*: Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," was published in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly,* September 1959. The author combed many newspaper accounts and other sources and presented the most comprehensive and most accurate story to date of the ship and her fate. Concluding the article was an update of the *Brother Jonathan* legacy:

> Ninety-four years have elapsed since the startling news of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* crackled over the Jacksonville telegraph line. The gruesome details of body salvaging are all but forgotten except for the soiled and broken headstones of two sailors presumably on the ship when she crashed, and now in storage awaiting the completion of a public cemetery park projected at Crescent City. The citizens of this northern California community have recently obliterated the old, desecrated and unkept Brother Jonathan Memorial Cemetery on the bluff overlooking the scene of the wreck, and plan to build a fitting monument to the memory of the victims. Nearby, the old lighthouse shelters a crowning collection of maritime and pioneer history of Del Norte County.[1]

Graves and markers were removed to storage, as noted, and a housing development took over the site. However, human remains were not completely cared for, as on later occasions bones were found by residents.

A Feud Brought to Light (1960)

The *Oakland Tribune*, September 4, 1960, included allegations that in 1865 the Del Norte County coroner, J.E. Eldridge, stole valuable items from the bodies of the dead:

> The *Brother Jonathan:* In Crescent City's pioneer cemetery overlooking the Pacific Ocean are two crushed and weather-beaten headstones that mark the graves of Daniel and Polina Rowell, victims of a raging sea that sank the sidewheel steamer *Brother Jonathan* near Point St. George on July 30, 1865—one of the worst maritime disasters in Pacific Coast history. Estimates of the day said 100 to 300 persons lost their lives. Forty-five bodies were washed ashore in the vicinity of Crescent City, and others were found near Trinidad Head. Most were buried where they were found, their unmarked graves having long since been obliterated by the wind and the waves.
>
> Similarly obliterated by time is the story of a feud 30 years later between two Crescent City newspaper editors—a feud that grew out of that tragic 1865 shipwreck. The 1895 feuding newsmen were John L. Childs, editor of the *Crescent City News*, and J.E. Eldridge, editor of *The Record*. Eldridge was the Del Norte County coroner and public administrator at the time of the shipwreck in 1865. Just what the cause of the original feuding was, we don't know, but editor Childs' bitterness eventually spilled over onto the page of *The News* one day, and Editor Eldridge took him to court on a charge of criminal libel.
>
> "Childs," he accused, "published a defamatory libel, tending to impeach his honesty, integrity, virtue and reputation...." All of this we now learn from Mrs. Carrie Pratt Elwell, who was the official reporter in the Del Norte County Superior Court of Judge James E. Murphy at the time. "Several old men were called as witnesses," Mrs. Elwell recalls, "but their memories were fragile, and their testimony valueless...."
>
> [Regarding the *Brother Jonathan* and the coroner, the account now assumes a quasi-biblical tone]: So close came she that a sunken rock was struck and she was swallowed up by the cruel sea, and there was a hundred and three score and 10 that perished. There was grief in the hearts of all, save the chief ruler of the land who was the buryer of the dead, who said to himself, "I will find thereupon much plunder." For covetousness filled his heart. And he did this thing, and in all there were two score and 17 found in whose raiment there proved to be many pieces of silver, much fine gold, jewels of great value; and many rings of worth, taken from the fingers of the dead, were turned over to him. And straightway he had coffins made and the bodies buried. When news of the great disaster spread over the land the kin went to the buryer of the dead and cast pieces of gold and silver at his feet, and fell upon their faces, saying: "Oh, Jonathan, we pray thee take this gold and silver and give unto us our dead that we may take them hence and bury them in the land of our forefathers."
>
> Who? Me?
>
> Continuing her version of the Childs' article, Mrs. Elwell quotes from The *News* as follows: "Then Jonathan arose, filled his belly with the juice of the grape, a goodly portion leaking through his whiskers, for verily Jonathan was filthy when drunk, and lifted his voice he spakath unto them: 'Nay, nay my good friends. Give unto me much more gold and silver, for truly it has cost me much to gather these bodies together. If you deliver unto me twice the amount cast before me, then shall ye have the bones of the dead and depart in peace.' And they answered, 'It is well thou shall have what thou asketh; for honesty is a stranger unto thee....'"

[1] Footnote in Lomax text: "Mrs. Harry C. Roberts, curator, provided references to persons familiar with the history of northern California. Perhaps the only remaining evidence of the once fine ship which made history on the Pacific Coast is the steering wheel which reposes in the window of the Oregon Oyster House in Portland."

A Popular Account (1961)

The *Brother Jonathan* continued to be cited in various shipwreck accounts. By 1961 treasure hunting was a very popular pursuit. In that year Fawcett Publications, an issuer of magazines and guides sold on newsstands, released *Treasure Hunters*, a 144-page soft-cover book by Robert I. Nesmith and John S. Potter, Jr.[1] Nesmith, an accomplished numismatist and a member of the American Numismatic Society, had written earlier of lost and recovered treasures in his well researched and absorbingly written *Dig for Pirate Treasure*.[2] The 1961 publication was intended as a casual guide and bore the cover notation, "Locations and techniques for finding treasure on land and sea." Of present relevance, the following was included, cited here as a representative of many such popular accounts:

> The 1,360-ton wooden steamer *Brother Jonathan* crashed into Northwest Seal Rocks, a part of St. George's Reef, 30 miles north of Eureka, on July 28 [*sic*], 1865. She hung there for a short time. Then the heel of her mast broke through the bottom and she went down with 166 crewmen [*sic*] and a treasure of gold and paper money worth $250,000. This was pay money for American troops, stored in the ship's safe. It is still there in the *Brother Jonathan's* wreckage, not far from St. George's Reef, perhaps 200 feet deep.

Brother Jonathan Co. (1970)

The *Sacramento Bee*, November 8, 1970, included this article by Charles Hillinger:

> North Coast Divers Expect To Recover Ship Lost In 1865 with Million-Dollar Cargo:
>
> One of the longest quests for a sunken ship in the Pacific has been going on for 105 years in a small northern California coastal town. Where is the *Brother Jonathan?* That question has haunted the people of Crescent City ever since the square-rigged sidewheeler struck a submerged rock off-shore and went to the bottom July 30, 1865. It was the worst disaster on the Pacific Coast up to that time—213 men, women and children drowned. Only 19 survived. Attempts to find the remains of the *Brother Jonathan* to salvage her multimillion-dollar cargo have been going on intermittently ever since. Heading up the latest effort is Dr. Larry Holcomb, 38, psychologist for the Del Norte County Unified School District and lifelong Crescent City resident.
>
> "Our divers have found the completely encrusted hull of a wooden ship the size of the *Brother Jonathan*," reported Holcomb. "It's at a depth of 132 feet"
>
> "There's a strong possibility it is the *Brother Jonathan*," said Dean Fox, 39, principal diver of Holcomb's group. "We've set foot on the hull a half dozen times in recent weeks. But it's difficult to identify anything specific. And, we haven't been able to stay down any length of time. We're going to wait until spring when conditions are better We're going to bring in more sophisticated equipment." He described visibility at best as two to three feet, the water ice cold, and the turbulence "unbelievable."...
>
> "This is one of the most treacherous areas along the Pacific Coast," explained John Fraser, 38, Del Norte County supervisor, another member of Holcomb's group. "We know of 11 other ships at the bottom off our shores, ships that crashed into huge rocks that litter the bay...."
>
> There's seldom a calm day in the waters off Crescent City. Most of the time white caps slam into shore. "It was the sea that tore our town apart in 1964." Tidal waves generated by the Alaskan earthquake battered Crescent City March 28, 1964, leaving 11 dead and destroying 29 city blocks. The fierceness of the sea off Crescent City is why the *Brother Jonathan*, sought since she sunk, has yet to be salvaged.
>
> "There's nothing new about our search," said Lorin Bosch, 31, Crescent City High School teacher, "except that we're going to find her. Crescent City people have been looking for the *Brother Jonathan* on and off down through the years. My grandfather was born here in 1864, a year before she sunk. He was a diver. He hunted for her in the 1880s and 1890s."
>
> Holcomb has spent the last 20 years collecting information on the *Brother Jonathan*.... Recently, Holcomb and seven others formed the Brother Jonathan Co.[3] "We incorporated with the sole purpose of finding the ship. We each put up $500. We'll share equally in whatever we find. We're confident we're going to succeed."
>
> The ship was reportedly carrying in excess of $1 million worth of gold bullion for delivery to the Canadian government. A Wells Fargo official was aboard accompanying several boxes of coins.
>
> "In 1914 the Canadian government sent a salvage ship to Crescent City to hunt for the gold," said Holcomb.... Prior to organizing the Brother Jonathan Co., the Crescent City psychologist spent five years building a suitable search vessel, the 26-foot *Wind Song*.... The Brother Jonathan has staked a claim with the State Lands Commission for exclusive search rights in four areas of ocean bottom off Crescent City. In return, the State of California will receive 25% of anything found up to $25,000, 50% of anything found above that. Three divers are members of the corporation of eight. Married men Dean Fox, Jimmy Moore, and Ben Kirby, Jr. The others, in addition to Holcomb, Fraser, and Bosch, are Dr. Glen Ohlson (professor at San Francisco State College) and Lee Smallwood (a mechanical engineer). Smallwood, at 59, oldest in the group, operates the search party's metal detector.
>
> "Each of us has a special skill," said Holcomb. "In the back of our minds we have the idea that if the ship is still intact we'll raise her and make a nautical museum out of her. The *Jonathan* was so structurally strong, the deck planking was 14-inch thick white oak. You can imagine the massive frames and ribs needed to support it."
>
> Holcomb and Fraser, the county supervisor, have been close friends since childhood. They were classmates at Del Norte High School. "Growing up in Crescent City," said Fraser, "you can't help but be attracted to the sea and the *Brother Jonathan*. You stand on the rocky cliffs overlooking the ocean knowing that somewhere on the bottom not too far offshore lies the remains of that ship."

[1] Nesmith, Robert I. and John S. Potter, Jr. *Treasure Hunters*. Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1961, pp. 131 (map) and 138 (above quoted account).

[2] His *Dig for Buried Treasure*, The Devin-Adair Co., New York, 1958, had achieved extensive popularity. Potter was a member of the Atlantic Salvage Co. and was author of *The Treasure of the Rande*. The book, *Dig for Pirate Treasure*, contains an excellent bibliography and much numismatic material, the latter primarily relating to the coins of Spanish America. The *Brother Jonathan* is not mentioned.

[3] Elsewhere cited as the Brother Jonathan Salvage Co.

"In high school John and I had an old history teacher, George Berry, who's been dead now for quite some time," said Holcomb. "Mr. Berry's father was 10 years old when the *Brother Jonathan* went down. His father walked the beach for days with other people from Crescent City looking for bodies."

Update on the Holcomb Group (1974)

Fred Dickey, "The Search for the Brother Jonathan." *California Today*, July 7, 1974, described the recent activities of the Brother Jonathan Salvage Company, illustrating some of the principals: John Fraser ("prosperous Crescent City businessman"), Lee Smallwood, Dr. Larry Holcomb (leader of the group), and Dean Fox (a mill worker who was one of two in the group with diving experience). "They are determined to find the wreck and lift the treasure," the account noted. No treasure had been recovered since the formation of the group in 1970.

Dr. Holcomb was quoted as saying that the current in the area where the ship was believed lost runs at about seven miles per hour, and that 130 feet deep the visibility was only arm's length. Further, it was stated that conditions permitted only about 20 days during the late summer when "safe, productive dives can be made." The group, "with assets in the low four figures," had to rely upon scuba diving equipment, for a full rig of the type used in deep-sea diving would cost about $1,500 per day, or far beyond their budget. It was noted that there was no urgency in the matter, as the company had "the salvage rights the state bestowed upon it in 1969."

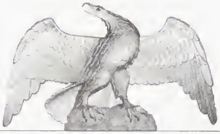
Later Years

Searches continued for the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, which by the 1970s and 1980s was well known to scuba divers and others. By the end of the 1980s, the wrecks of many sunken ships off the California coast had been visited by divers. Few had serious intent, fewer yet had official permits of any kind, and most simply took any items of interest they found.

There were a few success stories. The remains of the *S.S. Winfield Scott*, sunk in 1853, yielded a small handful of gold coins, and perhaps some others did as well. If so, the latter finds did not reach print.

Meanwhile the true location of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* remained as mysterious as ever.

Chapter Fifteen



Deep Sea Research, Inc.

Aspects of Historical Ship Salvage

How should a sunken ship be salvaged? Should it be salvaged at all?

These questions and others are often raised when publicity is given to the salvage of items from a long-submerged ship. It seems that everyone has an opinion—and often these opinions differ widely. Perhaps this is in keeping with the lore of the sea itself, in that one can read a dozen different accounts about the sinking of a ship and learn a dozen different versions of the "facts." As has been seen from the narrative of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, precise-appearing but widely varying figures have been stated in print as to the number of passengers aboard and the number of survivors. Basic information such as the loading of the ship, the amount of treasure carried, and the very seaworthiness of the vessel also have been stated in different ways.

A coin from the *DeBraak:* Silver eight reals "dollar" of Charles IIII of Spain, 1794, counterstamped at the center with the portrait of British King George III in an oval, indicative of its acceptance for trade in British commercial channels at a time when British silver coins were scarce. (Harvey Harrington)

In the 1980s and 1990s the sunken wreck of the White Star Line steamer *Titanic* furnished the subject for many newspaper articles. Should it be explored? If so, should any artifacts be brought to the surface? Is the very exploitation of the *Titanic* disaster via books and films a desecration of the undersea graveyard? Does the addition of fictional characters to a dramatization improve one's understanding of the tragedy, or does it make a mockery of what should be a solemn remembrance?

Similarly, but in a far less publicized situation, the salvage of the British privateer *DeBraak* in the 1980s was at first (under the aegis of Harvey Harrington) a fortunate recovery of a treasure trove of priceless artifacts and historical information. When the original finders of the wreck, Sub-Sal, Inc., ran out of funds after having spent about $2 million, new investors took over the project. The later salvors, Drew Associates, spent a further $3 million. However, the manner in which the wreck was raised caused much controversy. When all was said and done, the recovered items were valued by a court at $300,000 and sold to the State of Delaware for that amount. If there had been no commercial investors, the *DeBraak* would still be on the sea floor, undiscovered, and a century or two from now there would be little if anything left. The *DeBraak* artifacts, some 20,000 in number, include many items being displayed for public education and enjoyment in the Zwaanendael Museum in Lewes, Delaware. Certainly, present and future generations will learn much from viewing these exhibits. Without regard to any aspect of the recovery, I am simply providing an example of different views of the same project.[1]

[1] A detailed discussion of the *DeBraak* is found in Bowers's *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997. Additional sources include an original account in the *New York Gazette*, May 30, 1798; Thomas H. Sebring, *Treasure Tales*, 1986, pp. 101-104; Gary Gentile's *Shipwrecks of Delaware and Maryland*, 1990, pp. 54-55. "Ship Salvager Says it Struck Gold," by Jan B. Warrick, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 18, 1984, was written soon after the discovery of the wreck by Sub-Sal and tells of artifacts found. (Later articles involving the controversial recovery methods of Drew Associates are beyond the scope of the present text.)

I am reminded of the old tale of the several blind men who encountered the same elephant and tried to determine its characteristics. One touched its trunk and thought the elephant was like a hose. Another touched its side and likened the beast to a wall. Another came in contact with the tail and came to believe the elephant was like a rope. Still another touched a leg and thought the elephant was similar to a tree.

Via the media, including films, videotapes taken of the wreck, and display of salvaged artifacts, the *Titanic* has brought entertainment to hundreds of millions.

Depending upon one's point of view, the *Titanic* and the *DeBraak* are success stories that have contributed to our understanding of sea travel, human emotions, and the life styles of those aboard, or they are underwater memorial sites that should have been left undisturbed. Each was a tragedy, and each involved heavy loss of life. Would we be in a better position if neither ship had been explored by salvors?

Expanding the question, should the treasures of King Tutankhamen's tomb have been salvaged and arranged in museum exhibits that have toured the world, or should the tomb have remained forever sealed? In 1799 should Champollion have left the Rosetta Stone *in situ?* Should downed military aircraft be salvaged, meticulously restored, and used for collecting and museum exhibits?

Such questions can be debated endlessly. There is no absolute right. There is no absolute wrong. Sometimes there is a happy medium.

As will be seen, the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* project of the 1990s in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of California may well serve as a model of meticulous professional underwater archaeological and recovery techniques in combination with the careful removal of treasure. The same thing can be said for the exploration and recovery of items 3,000 miles away in the Atlantic Ocean at the site of the S.S. *Central America*. Personally, I believe that both salvage projects enriched the understanding of all of us concerning Gold Rush era sidewheel steamers, what they carried, and life aboard them. Much has been written about both ships. The efforts of salvors in both oceans have given all of us a rich window on the history of one of America's most exciting, most evolutionary, and most important eras.

In dramatic contrast to these two careful recoveries, the vast majority of ships that have been salvaged over the years have been broken apart or stripped of their contents with no respect for history, with little or nothing in the way of pre-planning or the use of conservation techniques, and with few records kept. For such recoveries there has been little benefit to the public, or to historians, or to anyone else, except, perhaps, to pleasure divers, thrill seekers, or salvagers of brass fittings and other items that were sold to be melted. The wreck of the S.S. *Yankee Blade,* lost off the coast of California, has been plundered and pillaged for over 100 years by divers and commercial interests, with the result that no one knows what has been salvaged, or by whom, or where the items are now. The wreck of the Gold Rush sidewheel steamer S.S. *Winfield Scott* has been dynamited and is of little use to anyone. The *Star of Scotland,* in the ocean off Santa Monica, California, has been blasted with explosives and pillaged, not once but repeatedly.

There is a case to be made for *careful* undersea salvage, as has been done with the aforementioned *Central America* and *Brother Jonathan* sidewheel steamers.

The Unrelenting Sea

In the end, the sea claims its own victims. Left unsalvaged in salt water, the sturdiest ship will rust and rot away over the centuries, leaving little to be found. Spanish treasure fleet ships lost nearly 300 years ago in the hurricane of 1715 off the coast of Florida have rotted away completely, leaving just ballast stones, heavily sea-etched coins, and a few artifacts. The ships themselves no longer exist except, perhaps, as stained patches of sand.

The process of destruction is a matter of time. Sidewheel steamers of the 1850s and 1860s—the era of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*—were built of wood and metal. Any such ship lost in the ocean has largely deteriorated in the 130 to 150 years since then. Wood parts have rotted away or have been consumed by marine life. Iron components have rusted, some to the point of being dissolved completely. Given another comparable span of years, little if anything will be left.

Any unprotected copper coins on ships sunk in the mid-nineteenth century have nearly or completely dissolved. Silver coins for the most part are heavily etched, severely lowering their numismatic value. In time they too will be gone. Gold coins are somewhat more fortunate, but these, too, occasionally show signs of light etching—witness the "seawater Uncirculated" 1855-S and 1856-S $20 coins discussed in Chapter 6. Given another century or two of submersion, probably little of archaeological, historical, or commercial value will remain on any sidewheel steamer wreck which sunk to the ocean floor in the 1850s or 1860s.

Would future generations centuries hence be better off if the *Brother Jonathan* and its artifacts and treasures had been allowed to disintegrate into rust and sediment and, finally disappear without a trace remaining?

While the writer, for one, would enjoy seeing the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* or some other Gold Rush era steamer salvaged in its entirety, brought to land, set up in a museum, and meticulously restored to its original condition, the fact is that so much deterioration has already taken place on most vessels—including the *Brother Jonathan*—that the best that can be done is to care for and display salvageable components and artifacts. Even if *unlimited* funds were available, such "restorations" would, in fact, be

reconstructions, *replicas*, as the original ships are too far deteriorated.

The ideal situation would be to have enlightened museums, state governments, or other entities furnish tens of millions of dollars *per ship* and salvage sunken vessels of interest and importance which may be mostly intact today. However, this is not likely to be done anytime in the near future for 99.9% of the thousands of ships sunk in American coastal waters. No doubt in the present era of heavy taxation of citizens, there would be a great hue and cry if a state were to propose spending many millions of dollars to recover any ship whose name was unfamiliar to the public and which did not figure in some historical battle or other well-known event. If any state feels otherwise, many thousands of undersea wrecks beckon—including over 1,600 off the coast of California alone.

In the meantime, it has been left to investors and entrepreneurs in the private sector to raise funds and develop recovery methods. Probably, no group of ship salvors in existence—private entities, museums, government authorities, or anyone else—could conduct the search and recovery of artifacts in a manner that would please absolutely everyone.

That said, it seems that the searchers for the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* have endeavored to combine historical tradition, respect for the tragedy, and financial reality in a manner that will preserve the legacy of the ship, its cargo, and the memory of those who went down with it. Along the way the present book will serve to bring much historical information to light that might have been lost otherwise or at least not published within the covers of a single volume. Repeating an earlier figure, 99.9% of the thousands of ships sunk in American coastal waters have never been studied extensively and probably never will be.

Now, the story of the search....

Sea-Epics Research Leads the Way

The modern era of exploration for the wreck of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* dates from September 1988, when Sea-Epics Research, Inc., founded by Donald G. Knight, of Diamond Bar, California, was granted a permit by the State Lands Commission to search for the long-lost ship. Facts concerning the ship's history were elusive at the time, much folklore had been repeated and believed, and even a new (at least to the present writer) story emerged: a newspaper account quoting a principal of Sea-Epics stated that the *Brother Jonathan* had been "named after an early-day East Coast pirate." It was further related that the vessel *had already been located* five miles offshore in 180 feet of water.[1] Such stuff made interesting reading, but both statements were completely untrue.

Further, it was hoped that treasure amounting to as much as $2,400,000 in present-day value would be found. True enough on this count. Hope springs eternal, it has been said. However, Sea-Epics did not have sufficient funds to engage in undersea exploration, and the project did not continue—at least not for a while.

Deep Sea Research, Inc., Formed

Donald G. Knight remained enthusiastic about the *Brother Jonathan* and the prospects for finding it (for, in fact, it was still unlocated). Among those to whom he talked was Dr. Cliff Cummins of Riverside, California. Cummins was fond of vigorous exercise and healthful endeavors, and as part of his regimen he often ran from the top of Mt. San Jacinto—a rocky crag high above Palm Springs—down to the charming little town of Idyllwild nestled in the forest below, and then back up the mountain. This rigorous 14-mile trek began and ended each week from the restaurant at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway located on the mountaintop. As he rested from his exertions, he often talked with others, including the operator of the Tramway terminal complex, Sherman Harris. Soon, the restaurateur learned about the need for funding to find the lost ship or, more particularly, a specific iron safe which he believed contained golden treasure. It was thought that magnetometer tapes confirmed the safe had been found, and not far from Jonathan Rock, as the fatal projection from the sea bottom had been designated for many years.

Harris, who had been involved in various successful enterprises during his business career, perked up his ears, met with Knight, and became so enthusiastic that in early 1991 he plunked down $20,624 for a 6% interest in any treasure found. Several of Harris' friends joined the circle, including his brother-in-law, David L. Flohr, a Navy man and entrepreneur of San Diego. By this time a "point" or 1% interest in the treasure was pegged at $3,437. By mid-1991 the pool of available funds totaled $55,000.

In May of the same year Deep Sea Research, Inc. (DSR) was incorporated under the state laws of California. Founding shareholders were Donald G. Knight, Harvey Harrington (a highly experienced ship salvor who had been with Sea-Epics), and James Wadsley (who also had extensive experience in diving and salvage). Later in the year Sherman Harris purchased common stock in the new company. In October a shareholders' meeting was held in Santa Barbara, and many plans were made, including compensation for those who intended to give their time to the hunt for the long-lost ship and to any salvage operation if the vessel should be found. Several brief trips were made to Crescent City by DSR officers and investors during this era. They made the acquaintance of Barry Sutton, a retired California State Highway Patrol officer who lived locally and who captained the charter ship *Top Cat*, which was used in prowling around the nearby coastal waters. Sutton had been fascinated by the

[1] *Sacramento Bee*, September 16, 1988, "State Allows Hunt for Gold Lost Off North Coast in 1865."

stories he had heard of the *Brother Jonathan,* and welcomed the opportunity to assist DSR, as he had done with Sea-Epics earlier.[1]

Biographical sketches are given below (alphabetically) of several men who in time would be among those who controlled DSR, Messrs. Flohr, Harrington, and Harris. In addition, James A. Wadsley served as an officer and played a very important role.

David L. Flohr

David L. Flohr, with an extensive background in both business and nautical matters, joined Deep Sea Research, Inc., in 1992 as treasurer of the firm. He and his wife Mary, the parents of three children, live in El Cajon, near San Diego, California, and maintain the business office of DSR there.

Born in Bucyrus, Ohio, in 1925, Flohr spent his youth in Southern California. In 1943 he joined the U.S. Navy as an aviation cadet, later serving in active and reserve duty for 20 years, retiring as a naval aviator with rank of commander in 1963. Flohr received his degree in Business Administration at the University of Redlands in 1951, followed by his MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business in 1953. His business activities have been numerous and varied. After graduation he did financial analysis for the Kaiser Steel Corporation until 1965, working with computer systems and procedures toward the end of his tenure. He then founded an automobile repair company, which he operated briefly, then sold in order to accept an offer from D.W. Phillips International in Brussels, Belgium. From 1967 to 1971 he oversaw manufacturing and distribution functions for this world-wide company.

David Flohr is the "money man" in more ways than one, managing the corporate offices and keeping an eye on business affairs.

In 1971 he resigned from Phillips and moved back to California. In San Diego he opened a chain of franchised specialty food stores (Hickory Farms of Ohio), which grew to include 17 outlets with 500 employees. In 1984 he sold the business to another franchiser. In the same year he went to Israel as a volunteer to assist in diving and underwater exploration as part of the Caesarea Ancient Harbor Excavation Project. Returning to San Diego, he became a volunteer for several different organizations including working with armed service personnel, prison outreach, and the Boy Scouts of America. In 1993 Flohr joined with Alan Uke, founder of the San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum, who was just starting his efforts to bring the carrier *U.S.S. Midway* out of mothballs in Bremerton, Washington, and tow it to San Diego. The museum and its tourist, historical, and educational programs promise to be a major attraction in the San Diego area when the facility opens in mid-2000.

David Flohr continues as vice president, treasurer, and director of DSR. His log or journal of one of the treasure searches—that conducted in 1996—is quoted at length in Chapter 16.

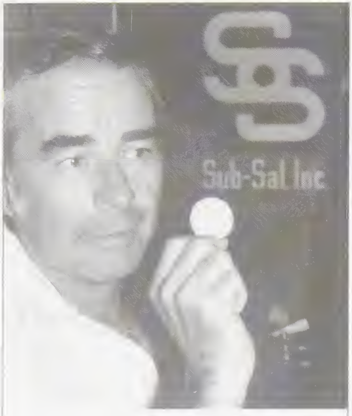
Harvey Harrington

Harvey Harrington, born in Scituate, Rhode Island in 1932, became interested in diving in a serious way in 1960 during inspection and repair work on bridge piers on behalf of Rhode Island municipal and state authorities. In 1966 he was engaged by the state's Department of Harbors and Rivers to inspect areas of ocean bottom and to conduct an electronic survey of salinity, speed, direction and current flow at Seconik Point. In 1969 he was employed by the Dredging Corporation of America de Panama as superintendent and diver on a communication cable salvage project in Central America. In the early 1980s he served the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard in undersea inspections and repairs of shore installations. During the same decade he worked on diving and salvage operations ranging from hydroelectric power plants to the recovery of submerged railroad cars. He also successfully investigated over a dozen shipwrecks.

In the 1970s Harrington compiled a list of several hundred lost ships which seemed to have potential for having significant treasure if the wrecks could be found. With careful study, by the early 1980s he narrowed the roster down to 10 sites which had exceptional interest.

In 1982-1983 Harrington went to California to research the history of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and to determine what he could about her location. Seeking to obtain a search permit from the State of California, he encountered sufficient difficulty that he dropped the idea for the time being.

[1] Reminiscences by Sutton are included in Chapter 16.



Harvey Harrington in the early 1980s with an artifact from the *DeBraak*.

He then went to Delaware to search for another entry on his list, the lost British privateer *DeBraak*. On May 25, 1798, the *DeBraak* was sailing in the Atlantic Ocean off of the East Coast of America. Needing repairs, she headed into Delaware Bay off Cape Henlopen, where Captain James Drew believed that the necessary work could be done. Aboard were silver and gold coins seized from Spanish vessels in the Caribbean plus £80,000 in British gold that had been loaded aboard the ship in Jamaica for transport to England. Many captured Spanish sailors were kept aboard in chains as prisoners. An unexpected gale hit the ship, and it sank with the captain, 37 crew members, and nearly all of the prisoners. Although it went down in only a few fathoms of water, the treasure was not recovered, and in time its location was forgotten.

In 1983-1984, as chief executive officer of Sub-Sal, Inc., Harrington and his associates employed multiple scientific systems in the finding of the *DeBraak*, including Klein side scan sonar, magnetic down-line, and other sophisticated techniques. Subsequently, divers carefully brought up artifacts including cannon, bottles, and china from a depth of about 80 feet. Divers also located a quantity of diverse Spanish-American silver eight-real and gold eight-escudo pieces, British gold guineas, and other coins dated from 1792 to 1796.

James G. Horn, executive officer of the security guard company involved in protecting the exploration for Sub-Sal, later commented:[1]

> I found Mr. Harrington to be a dedicated historian as well as a professional salvor in every sense of the concept. His method of excavation was methodical and done entirely by hand. He started the initial process of preservation of the artifacts and cooperated with the State of Delaware in their long-term maintenance. At all of his news conferences as well as all interviews, he stressed the historical importance, character, and significance of each individual artifact. He did not permit heavy machinery or explosives to be used on the project, although he was skilled in their use.... He was and is a reliable, professional gentleman on whose word everyone can depend....

"Wreck Findings are Pieces of History," by Molly Murray, *The News Journal*, August 11, 1997, described the elation of museum officials on the acquisition of artifacts (excerpt):

> The *DeBraak* gives us "an unparalleled glance of life at sea... frozen in time," said Charles Fithian, curator of archaeology for Delaware State Museums. "It provides some important insights.... The artifacts tell a story of everyday life on the ship. There are the tools of the ship's surgeon, razor handles and clay pipe bowls. There are heavy drinking glasses, in perfect condition, of the sort historians believe were called 'firing glasses'—when set upon the table forcefully, they made a sound like a musket being fired. And there are navigational tools—sextants, parallel rules and a mahogany telescope, with much of the finish still intact. There are bottles with medicine still in place, barrels held the ship's stores and ammunition canisters that hold rounds. With so many items salvaged, it is unlikely most Delawareans will ever get to see them all. A *DeBraak* exhibit is on display at the Zwaanendael Museum in Lewes. The display is expected to be updated and changed in the coming months. In the meantime, there is plenty left to study. The secrets of this collection have not all been revealed yet."

All went well for Harvey Harrington *except* the finances. Although many historically important artifacts had been retrieved, expenses far outran any expected income. Sub-Sal could no longer continue. In his desire to see the project go forward, Harrington had to take in new investors. Due to procedural differences, Harrington left to pursue other interests. Drew Associates was formed by others, and it was decided to raise the wreck in its entirety. The procedure did not go well; the hull turned over in its harness, and many artifacts were dumped back into the sea. After the hull was raised, a clamshell bucket scoop was used to recover any remaining artifacts.

Harrington did not forget the *Brother Jonathan*. From 1988 until the formation of Deep Sea Research, Inc., he worked with Sea-Epic Research and was important in the early searches for the lost sidewheel steamer. A principal, director, and investor in Deep Sea Research, Inc. since its founding in 1991, Harrington serves as vice president and as director of off shore operations, drawing upon his extensive knowledge of recovery techniques and nautical history. He and his wife Pat live in Florida where he operates a boat in the Gulf of Mexico.

1. Letter, July 19, 1994, to the California State Lands Commission attesting to the archaeological integrity of Harvey Harrington and his careful methods.

Sherman Harris

Sherman Harris, entrepreneur par excellence, has been involved in businesses for many years. Currently he operates two of the most visible enterprises in Palm Springs, California—the aforementioned Aerial Tramway, which lifts passengers to the top of a high mountain where there are a restaurant and shops—and, down on the main business street of Palm Springs, Sherman's Delicatessen, a large restaurant with accompanying deli. A scale model of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* is on display near the reception desk at the front entrance of the restaurant, but probably not one visitor in a hundred realizes Sherman's connection and the fascinating story connected with it.

Harris was born in Superior, Wisconsin, in 1923. His leadership was demonstrated at an early age, and he graduated from high school as student body president. World War II was raging, and he joined the U.S. Army, serving in the infantry for three years, participating in and surviving several major actions and engagements including D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge. Honorably discharged as a sergeant in 1945, Harris returned to his home town, where in 1947 he opened his first business, a coffee shop. In 1952 he moved west to the rapidly expanding resort of Palm Springs located in the desert in the shadow of Mt. San Jacinto, about a three-hour drive from Los Angeles. There he managed Lautre's Steak Ranch. In 1959 he opened his own restaurant, Sherman's Steak House, which formed the nucleus of an enterprise that eventually included five restaurants conducted simultaneously. In 1968 he was invited to take over the management of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway's restaurant, gift shop, and other public facilities, a multimillion dollar operation he has now managed with success for over 30 years.

Learning of the Deep Sea Research, Inc., project to search for the *Brother Jonathan* his interest was piqued. He became an investor, shareholder, and fund raiser. Since 1994 he has served as president of DSR. He and his wife Rosemary live in Palm Springs. In 1998 Sherman was honored by the city by being awarded a "star" on the sidewalk of Palm Springs' main boulevard. He was recognized as a humanitarian for his many charitable activities over the preceding 30 years.

Searching for Gold (1991-1992)

For many years the search by various parties for the long-lost *S.S. Brother Jonathan* had been concentrated around the so-called Brother Jonathan Rock, usually simply known as Jonathan Rock. Whether this was *the* fatal rock no one knows. However, it is low lying in the water and is a likely candidate. In 1991-1992, principals of Deep Sea Research, Inc., traveled to Crescent City on several occasions. Barry Sutton's charter boat, *Top Cat*, took the treasure seekers out to sea on these explorations.

In the summer of 1991, H. Arnold ("Arnie") Carr, of American Underwater Search & Survey, Ltd., of Cataumet, Massachusetts, who had worked with Harvey Harrington on the *DeBraak* project earlier (but who was not responsible for its discovery), arrived with sophisticated side-scan sonar equipment. Carr spent several days close to Jonathan Rock and in nearby locations, making sonar records.[1] During the search a 200-foot target was located at a distance some miles away from the rock, but the sea was generally rough, which hampered the resolution of the images. The sonar device could determine outlines of objects, but confirmation had to be made by other methods including photography and personal observation.

The services of the operator of a remotely operated undersea vehicle equipped with a camera were secured, and videotape footage was made of the sea floor around Jonathan Rock, revealing a form or outline which some viewers of the footage hopefully thought might be the safe from the *Brother Jonathan*, and chock-full of gold coins. If so, everyone's dreams would be realized, and profits would soon be aplenty!

In reality, treasure *might* be at hand. Or, it *might not* be.

In reality, the underwater outline *might* be an iron safe. Or, it *might not* be.

The annals of treasure hunting dramatically reveal that the ocean readily devours countless dollars spent on exploration, but gives up very little in return. Secrets of the deep are well kept.

As more money was spent by DSR, no tangible recoveries were made. Some of the investors became dissatisfied. By September 1992 funds had run out, no coin-filled safe or other golden treasure had been brought to the surface, and the project seemed to be at a standstill. The officers and investors held a meeting, and changes were made. David Flohr was put in charge of any new funds that might be raised, and any expenses incurred henceforth were to be paid only upon the approval of the corporate officers.

There was still great hope that undersea treasure would be found, and existing investors increased their stake by $75,000. However, even more funds were needed. By December 1992, the budget for proposed operations stood at $124,000.

The Summer of 1993

In 1993 it was hoped that the summer would provide a window for undersea exploration near Jonathan Rock, the location suggested by the work to date. All agreed that the months of August and September provided the best combi-

1. At other times, including since the Crescent City activities, Carr and his firm were involved in other undersea searches including the recovery of parts of a Boeing 747 off the coast of Taiwan and components of the 747 lost in TWA Flight 800 off the coast of Long Island, NY.

The two-man submarine *Delta* in readiness for an exploratory dive. (DSR photograph).

nation of wind, wave, and weather conditions in the Pacific Ocean near Crescent City, although even at that time there could still be problems. The rockbound coast of northern California was well known for its difficult and dangerous conditions, and all were aware of the many ships that had perished in the area over a long period of years.

To explore the sea bottom near Jonathan Rock, Knight met with Don Siverts, owner of a bright yellow one-man submarine, the *Snooper,* and gained familiarity with the tiny vessel. Later, the little *Snooper* would prove to be very useful.

In the summer of 1993, DSR negotiated a contract with Delta Oceanographics of Ventura, California, for use of another mini-submarine, the two-man *Delta,* which was on board the salvage ship *M/V Cavalier.* The firm's equipment had been working in Alaska, and it was a convenient arrangement to have the *Cavalier* stop at Crescent City on the way back down the Pacific coast to its home port north of Los Angeles.

The "window" for the hoped-for finding of the gold filled safe was set to begin on Sunday, September 25, 1993, and end on Saturday, October 1. Many people, pieces of equipment, and other facilities needed to be brought together at Crescent City and coordinated as part of the arrangement. Good teamwork and careful planning were essential.

Using magnetometer readings, it was believed the most likely place to seek the treasure was close to Jonathan Rock, removing the need for a wide search. Now, all that remained was to locate the safe and bring it to the surface. Anticipation ran high, and a group of investors came to Crescent City to be on hand when the great find was announced. The ship cruised in slow circles in the vicinity of Jonathan Rock seeking the long lost gold. However, no treasure was found.

By Friday night, September 30, there was widespread disappointment. The investors were ready to leave town, and the ship's crew had no cheery prospects to offer. Days of circling around Jonathan Rock and exploring the nearby sea bottom had turned up nothing even remotely resembling treasure, nor did the current efforts yield further clues as to where to search. How an iron safe could "disappear" was somewhat of a mystery, but in any event it was nowhere to be found. The next morning several of the investors awakened in their hotel rooms, gathered their luggage, and left Crescent City.

A Southerly Direction

However, on the *Cavalier* on Friday night, after most of the crew went to bed, some of the DSR directors on board and Barry Sutton felt it was time to search south of Jonathan Rock. Part of the plan for this operation was to search the area of the earlier 200-foot target located in 1991. There was some disagreement among those committed to the idea of "the Rock" as the location where the *Brother Jonathan* went down. Finally, all agreed. There was not much to lose.

The *M/V Cavalier* on duty during the search for the long-lost *Brother Jonathan*.

Men, equipment, and lots of activity aboard the *Cavalier* in late summer 1996 as part of the Deep Sea Research, Inc., treasure recovery project. (DSR photograph).

Days of searching around Jonathan Rock had yielded absolutely nothing of value or any clues where to look next, and there was only one day left for exploration. Why waste it at Jonathan Rock?

Harvey Harrington, director of operations for DSR, set the plan in motion. For a long time, Harvey had carried Sutton's loran coordinates of the site in his pocket notes, hoping someday to check them out. Now, all fell in place. Harrington furnished the loran numbers to Captain Kenneth Gray of the *Cavalier*, who with his first mate, Don Chestnut, was all set to explore the site.

In the early hours of Saturday morning, October 1st, the *Cavalier* began cruising in other areas, progressing far to the south of Jonathan Rock. Connected by cable to the ship was a sophisticated side-scan sonar device, which Jim Waddell controlled on a monitor and screen. Mark Barnum, side-scan operator and surveyor who was Jim's associate in a business venture, [illegible], was also there as was Don Siverts' son Curt. Harvey Harrington was on hand to supervise the operation. David Flohr, Barry Sutton and others aboard eagerly awaited the outcome.

Finally, the *Cavalier* was far from the traditional location and was over two miles to the south of Jonathan Rock. Because the bottom conditions in the area were flat and sandy—in contrast to the rocks and boulders at the sea bottom near Jonathan Rock—the target was located rather easily, using the loran numbers and confirming it with the side-scan device. Soon after daybreak, around 7:00 a.m., the *Snooper*, manned by Don Siverts, was lowered into the water for visual inspection.

Then it happened:

Bingo!

There was the wreck of a sidewheel steamship!

Excitement prevailed.

Don Siverts related his experience:[1]

[1] Letter, January 19, 1999

The submersible had a little negative buoyancy as I skimmed along the bottom with the sub leaving its telltale circular mark in the soft, silty bottom. After three days of running "up and down transects" over Brother Jonathan Rock, it was nice not having to hear the vertical thruster. On this last scheduled day of diving, the visibility was eight to 10 feet on the bottom as I peered out of the ports into the heavy "snow" suspended in the lower water column.

"Cavalier to Snooper, Cavalier to Snooper. New course of 254°." It was Curt, my son, calling down another course change in directing me towards an unidentified "target" documented the night before by side-scan sonar.

A small rockfish was noted out of the starboard port, and I swung the sub in his direction. He departed and I followed establishing a new course. Small debris and more rockfish began to appear, and I was sure I was approaching the "target." Reducing the sub's speed and adjusting the buoyancy to minimize disturbing sediments, I moved closer. "Now, what have we got?" I thought to myself. Moving forward toward a large dark shape, it materialized into an identifiable object. Three paddlewheel hubs were almost directly in front of me and a large net rose from the middle hub. The hub shaft tilted up and the hull structure was visible beneath it.

Calling topside I said, "Have target in front of me." I should have said, "We have found the *Brother Jonathan!*"

There was no doubt in my mind that the search was over!

Don's son, Curt Siverts, gave his recollections:[2]

I remember the first time in late 1992 when a representative from Deep Sea Research came down to the boat to have a look at our new one-man sub, *Snooper*, launched in 1991. He looked it over and complimented us on our boat and submersible. He told us about a dive job he had for us, searching for a shipwreck, the *Brother Jonathan*. He went on to tell stories of millions of dollars in gold coins that were documented on the vessel. At the end of the conversation, it sounded like a job from heaven, with one small exception; they did not have any money and we would have to work for a percent of the salvage.

My father, Don Siverts, president of Undersea Graphics, was skeptical about working for a "pie in the sky dream," to say the least. I, on the other hand, thought it sounded like a winning opportunity, so I invested some of my own money, as did some of my friends. At this point it did not matter whether we, Undersea Graphics, were involved in the project or not. But, as time passed, my father came around and decided to take a chance on the job.

I remember on the discovery trip in October 1993 we had been at sea looking for the alleged *Brother Jonathan* for days. Both of the subs, *Snooper* and *Delta*, had tirelessly searched around Jonathan Rock for weeks. The crew aboard the support ship figured this was a wild goose chase. Finally, on the last day of the trip—when all hope seemed to diminish—at 3:00 o'clock in the morning we, in the sonar shack, Harvey Harrington, Jim Wadsley, Barry Sutton and myself, saw an image scroll by on the side-scan sonar. We then marked the spot with a buoy and waited until daybreak.

Early in the morning we sent Don Siverts in *Snooper* down to investigate. Forty-five minutes into the dive we heard Don over the under water radio tell us that the target was in plain view!

All aboard shared in the enthusiasm. Here at last seemed to be the long-lost *Brother Jonathan!* Indeed, this realization eventually grew to be a fact, as there were no other unaccounted-for shipwrecks of sidewheel steamers in the area.

Although later accounts varied in some details concerning the final exploration leading to the discovery of the wreck and who did what, most everyone agreed that it was the result of a team effort. No one person could have done it alone.

The on-board cellular telephone was not used to alert the investors in their rooms in Crescent City, as security might be breached. All must be kept quiet until the find was confirmed. Six artifacts were recovered—dishes, bottles, and a spike. These would be used in filing a court action to show that, indeed, DSR had found the wreck they thought was the *Brother Jonathan*, and could lay legal claim to it.

A jumble of debris was on the sea bottom, but hardly an intact ship or even close to it. Seemingly, the elements had claimed most of the upper wooden parts, and many other components had been deposited in disarray. The site was over 250 feet down, or far deeper than the "finds" of the ship that had been reported glowingly in newspaper accounts for more than a century!

Soon thereafter, Fletcher C. Alford, a partner in the San Francisco law firm of Gordon & Rees, was employed to represent the interests of DSR in the projected recovery and to assure that all operations would be in full compliance with the law. The investors insisted that all appropriate legal and safety measures be taken and that the entire salvage operation—which had not yet been planned—be undertaken in the highest professional and historically responsible manner. This was in sharp contrast to the outright pillaging that had characterized diving operations by others on many other offshore California wrecks. A company was commissioned to prepare a film from underwater video footage taken by Don Siverts aboard the mini-sub *Snooper* during the M/V *Cavalier* operations.

To acquaint all concerned parties with the discovery, a confidential meeting of officers and investors was called in Palm Springs. The investors, who, indeed, had *invested* in the project with the hope of monetary return, were eager to see results. Earlier efforts at attracting the investors had centered around the hope for finding a treasure-filled iron safe. Now, it seemed to some investors that the main purpose was being forgotten or at least diluted. Many if not most of the principal investors in the project left the meeting confused, disappointed and wondering what to do next.

A newspaper account later told of [illegible] change in emphasis:[3]

But his idea of [illegible] began to change, he says as he surveyed the hulk [illegible] fishing nets. This was an underwater cemetery, he realized. Finding any treasure must be done [illegible] without pulling the wreck apart and [illegible] final resting place.[4]

[2] Interview and correspondence with Curt Siverts, January 1998.
[3] *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1996, "[illegible]," Richard C. Paddock.

may be that some of the dead talked to me in the 3½ hours I sat there, saying, 'If you protect us, we will give you everything we have.'" he recalled.

As a point of information, no investors or DSR officers had advocated "pulling the wreck apart and violating its victims' final resting place." Indeed, their direction was to handle the project with the greatest care and respect. And, later events would prove that this was done.

Moreover, there is no contemporary record of any humans being trapped aboard the ship or being disabled below decks. Most probably, all passengers floated away on July 30, 1865. Some were washed overboard as waves lashed the stricken vessel. Others were able to don life preservers. There was the best part of an hour of preparation time between the ship's impact on the fatal rock and the time the tip of her stern slipped beneath the waves. Even tethered or penned livestock floated away, as evidenced by the finding of camel and horse carcasses on the beach afterward. All principals in DSR had every interest in carefully preserving the remains of any victims, in the exceedingly unlikely event same should be found. Most probably, such would have been destroyed by sea animals or would have long since deteriorated and dissolved.

Further, it was the intent of DSR to explore the site in the finest professional manner, not to disturb the remaining structure of the ship, and to carefully remove any gold coins that might be found. The wreck itself would remain on the sea floor, although in its already deteriorated condition it hardly constituted a candidate for restoration by anyone. In time, the ship remains, exposed as they were on the top of the sea floor, would probably deteriorate completely. Future generations could only remember the *Brother Jonathan* by any artifacts and coins that could be found and brought to the surface.

Measurements revealed that the wreck was located about four and one half miles off the shore of California, seemingly placing it in international waters beyond the traditional three-mile limit. However, the State of California, upon learning where the wreck had been found, took the view that some protruding offshore rocks served to define its coastline outward, and that, indeed, the ship was in California territorial waters, even if barely.[1]

By boat from the dock in the Crescent City harbor, the wreck site was about nine miles across the water in a northwest direction.

Changes and Legal Activities 1994-1995

On February 8, 1994, a meeting of DSR shareholders was held at the Shilo Inn in Palm Springs, a facility owned by Mark S. Hemstreet, one of the investors. Dissatisfaction concerning the management style was expressed. In compliance with the by-laws of DSR, Donald G. Knight was voted out of the presidency and his position on the board of directors. The board now consisted of Sherman Harris, Jim Wadsley, Harvey Harrington, and David Flohr. An agreement was formulated with Knight and his attorney whereby certain compensation was made to him for past expenses, and Knight was to turn over all corporate and other records. Knight was to keep in the strictest confidence all information he had learned concerning the finding of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*. In 1994 Knight formed his own firm to pursue other interests.

With their collective eyes on the future, the DSR board members looked to the development of a recovery plan. Additional funds were needed, and Sherman Harris soon came through with $45,000 from two new investors. By this time the cost of a "point" or percentage share had increased, based upon the finding of the wreck, although to this time no treasure of monetary worth had been recovered.

Undersea Inspection

Meanwhile, news of the possible find of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* had reached the media, although the majority of DSR principals had wished to delay press coverage until more facts were known and a recovery program could be announced. With the thought that publicity might have attracted rogue divers and intruders, DSR decided to make a visual inspection of the underwater site.[2] At the same time, the survey would aid in planning for the later effort to carefully explore and map the underwater area and recover treasures and artifacts.

The effort was facilitated by the fortunate schedule of the *M/V Cavalier* and its two-man *Delta* submarine. In a repeat of the preceding year's scenario, the *Cavalier* was again on its way back from Alaska and could stop briefly at Crescent City.

Over a weekend in June 1994, for a cost of about $15,000, the wreck was again inspected, and all was found to be in good order. David Flohr, who was the passenger on one of the sorties by the mini-sub *Delta*, was awed and amazed by the appearance of the wreck and at the same time was shaken by the approach to the *Delta* of the largest octopus he had ever seen, like something out of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. He estimated its spread from tentacle tip to tentacle tip to be close to 20 feet!

While the DSR principals and *Cavalier* crew were above the wreck site a mysterious high-speed "spy boat" circled the treasure seekers. Numerous flashes indicated that a photographer was at work documenting DSR's presence (not that a flash was of much use in the open sea). The day after the

[1] Geographic coordinates of the wreck site, as later presented to federal authorities, are 43°46'29" north, and 124°20'50" west, with DSR obtaining exploration and recovery privileges for an area extending for a mile in all directions from this point.

[2] Information from the manuscript notes of David L. Flohr.

reconnaissance was finished, Peter Pelkofer, senior legal counsel of the California State Lands Commission, mailed a letter threatening court action to keep DSR away from the site. A coincidence? Perhaps so. Perhaps not. Attorney Fletcher C. Alford replied on behalf of DSR, and subsequently two DSR representatives—Alford and investor Mark Hemstreet—traveled to Sacramento in an effort to make some type of compromise with Pelkofer's office. It was soon realized that no agreement could be made. Alford recalls that Pelkofer stated that DSR would never win in court and, besides, there was no gold in the wreck anyway.[1]

The State of California

At this point, the State of California had little if any factual information concerning the status, condition, or other aspects of the wreck or, for that matter, even where it was located (except for information acquired after the fact from DSR court filings). So far as is known, no state representative had ever visited the site of the wreck, nor had any state representative contributed to the modern historical record and search for information about the *Brother Jonathan*.

Notwithstanding the preceding, the State of California stated a strong interest in possessing the wreck. Peter Pelkofer remained as the lead figure on the part of the state, and a series of court battles followed. DSR continued to be represented by attorney Fletcher C. Alford. In time, Alford could point to a long string of legal victories. However, the route was long, difficult, and expensive for everyone.

To secure title, the state would have to prove the first of the following three things and one of the second or third points:

1. That the wreck had been truly abandoned by everyone who had an interest (including insurance companies which may have paid claims) had to be proved.

And either or both of points 2 and 3 had to be proved:

2. That the wreck was embedded in the ocean floor (instead of resting on the seabed).

3. Or that the wreck was eligible for inclusion in the National Registry of Historic Places.

Meanwhile, the participants in Deep Sea Research, Inc., had their own respect for history and the memory of those lost. The scattered remains of the ship were to be kept in place, and any artifacts considered to be of historical or sentimental interest were to be offered to the Del Norte County Museum in Crescent City.

The series of court victories for DSR began with a presentation in September 1994 before Federal Judge Louis C. Bechtle in San Francisco. Fletcher C. Alford and his legal staff successfully fought all claims by the state.

David Flohr's journal records this (adapted):

> [In the appearance before Judge Bechtle] Peter Pelkofer of the State Lands Commission argued for the state and asked that the case be thrown out of federal court, to leave DSR's only recourse in state court. At the very beginning of the hearing it was apparent that several matters of fact had to be determined. These issues included questions of abandonment, embedment, and eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Judge Bechtle asked the parties to return to court a week later by which time he would rule on the facts.
>
> One week later Judge Bechtle did rule that the wreck was not embedded—as he could clearly see from the videotape taken at the site. He ruled that the wreck was not abandoned, noting the insurers in 1865 were named in the *New York Times* and that absent an overt act on their part, the insurers would not be presumed to have abandoned the wreck. He also chided the state for waiting eight years after the Abandoned Shipwreck Act to try to list the ship on the National Register of Historic Places. He noted the state waited until only *eight days* before the hearing to send someone to the Sacramento Library to try to dig up information supporting their position!
>
> Despite hoping to rule on the case within 10 days, the judge was called back to Philadelphia on a priority case, and it was not until March 1995, six months after the hearing, that his written ruling was delivered. The wait was justified by the overwhelming victory DSR achieved. The state lost on every point and was criticized by the judge for being so poorly prepared. The judge also ordered DSR to proceed with the recovery program.

This seemingly definitive finding was appealed by the state, leading to a string of other court actions against DSR. Attorney Alford and his well prepared, well informed legal team from Gordon & Rees went from one decisive victory to another, as judges sided with the facts presented, even winning a stunning 9-0 victory in the United States Supreme Court.[2]

A Memorial Observation

On Sunday, July 30, 1995, to mark the 130th anniversary of the sinking of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* on July 30, 1865, a special ceremony was held in Crescent City. Harvey Harrington presented to the Del Norte Historical Society a medicine bottle, a black wine bottle, and a porcelain plate brought up from the wreck, and stated that as DSR found other objects of historical interest, many more items would be donated, with the intent of mounting an exhibit to memorialize the tragedy and those who lost their lives. Harrington had been spending the summer in Crescent City and was looking forward to the beginning of salvage operations a few weeks hence.

The memorial service was held at the new Brother Jonathan Cemetery and Memorial Landmark at Ninth Street and Pebble Beach Drive. The Landmark included grave markers and some human remains brought to the site from the old Brother Jonathan Cemetery (now the location of a housing development).[4] The time was set for 1:30 p.m. Although the exact

[1] Communication of Fletcher C. Alford to author, January 1999.

[2] An overview of DSR's court cases is given in Appendix I.

[3] The medicine bottle was embossed "J.W. Hunnewell & Co. Boston"; the plate was made by Bridgwood & Clark.

[4] Although headstones from the old, traditional Brother Jonathan Cemetery were placed in a circle around a flag for the new memorial to the *Brother Jonathan*, not all bodies were "dug up," and it was reported that occasionally bones have been found by residents of the housing tract built on the site.

Memorial plaque honoring those who perished aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, as erected in the Brother Jonathan Cemetery and Memorial Landmark in Crescent City. (Del Norte County Historical Society)

moment of the disaster 130 years earlier was not known, it was thought that this could not be far off the mark.

Approximately 100 to 125 people came to participate. John Johannessen, a sea chaplain, gave a eulogy. A historical discussion of the ship was presented by Robert B. Swanson. Perhaps fittingly, the wind was blowing hard, a poignant reminder of the gale that the unfortunate ship had encountered so many years ago.

It was learned that Dr. Anson G. Henry, lost aboard the *Brother Jonathan* on that fateful day in 1865, was the great-great-grandfather of Arcata, California resident Julie Arthur, who had come to attend the ceremony. "The [illegible] Henry never had a chance to govern the future Washington State. He went down with the *Brother Jonathan* leaving five children fatherless," newspaper reporter Kie Relyea of the *Eureka Times-Standard* later wrote.[1]

For many years residents of Crescent City had wondered about the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, and many had participated in fruitless searches. Now, at last, the wreck had been found, and in time it would be possible for everyone to share in the historical significance of artifacts recovered. The local museum was encouraged to draw up a "want list" of items it might like to display if such could be found in the wreck by DSR divers.

The Del Norte County Museum, located in a former municipal building in Crescent City, is a fine attraction for anyone interested in local history–ranging from life in the founding era of the 1850s to the devastating tsunami wall of water that swept through the coastal area of the town on March 28, 1964, after the Alaska earthquake. Greeting visitors in a special room is the complex and ornate lighthouse mechanism, made in Paris and equipped with an intricate system of gears and Fresnel lenses, that once stood sentinel on the shore. The *Brother Jonathan* artifacts will be part of an extensive exhibit to be mounted after conservation procedures are completed.

The Exploration of 1995

Perhaps reflective of the challenges mounted by the often-tempestuous sea off the coast of Crescent City is this commentary by Kie Relyea, published in June 1995:[2]

1 "1865 Tragedy Recalled," Kie Relyea, *Eureka Times Standard*, July [illegible], 1995.

2 Excerpts from "Treasures in the Deep," *Eureka Times Standard*, June 18, 1995. The balance of the article gave an excellent summary of the legal action between DSR and the state and discussed various aspects of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, undersea recoveries, etc.

Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan named the ocean off the Americas' west coast "Pacificum" for its tranquil look. But appearances were deceiving—and deadly—for the fleets that traveled, and sank, off the treacherous California coast.

Humboldt and Del Norte counties have more than their share of nautical legends and tragedies. Beneath the icy water, from Point Delgado near Shelter Cove to Point St. George near Crescent City, lie the shattered bones of unfortunate souls and scattered remnants of cargoes. They sank with the barges, steamers, fishing vessels, and lumber schooners that once plied the North Coast.

"It's a rugged coast. It's a stormy coast," Eureka historian Ray Hillman said. "We have traditionally had a tremendous amount of maritime traffic. The more ships you have coming and going, the greater the chance for them to get into trouble."

And they did.

Newsboy. Northerner. Alaska. U.S.S. Milwaukee. Brother Jonathan. Brooklyn. Corona.

Early editions of the *Humboldt Times* and *Humboldt Standard* are filled with news of their misfortune. Some were embarrassing mistakes, others understandable in light of a dangerous coast and thick fog. And many were tragic as hundreds of hapless victims drowned.

There are thousands of shipwreck sagas from one end of the California coastline to the other. Their stories remain to be told by archaeologists and salvors plumbing the depths for ships' skeletons, searching for clues and riches from the past....

One San Diego salvaging company is banking on the riches believed to be in the *Brother Jonathan*, a steamship that lies 250 feet beneath the ocean about 4½ miles off Crescent City.... David L. Flohr, treasurer for Deep Sea Research, Inc., in San Diego, said the *Brother Jonathan* might have up to $400,000 in riches. "It is alleged to have—but we have no proof of this—at the time it sank somewhere between $200,000 and $400,000 in gold and currency," he said....

In the summer of 1995 Harvey Harrington, in temporary residence in Crescent City, anticipated a strong inflow of investor funds to help with recovery on the wreck site. August and September were the traditional windows of opportunity when the weather was apt to be at its best. Security arrangements were put in place, including the implementation of a mobile radar system. Unfortunately, the hoped-for additional capital did not materialize, and a full-scale recovery operation was not destined to take place, at least not that year.

However, in September, Jim Wadsley and Harvey Harrington were offshore at the site and did much valuable preparatory work. Side-scan sonar, a magnetometer, and the Global Positioning System (GPS) were employed to determine the extent of the *Brother Jonathan* debris field. The possibility that wreckage had been strewn along the sea floor all the way from the Jonathan Rock south to the wreck site, a distance of over two miles, was explored. When the ship went down in 1865, she had already broken apart to an extent, and there could have been ship parts, machinery, or even the much-discussed iron safe on the sea floor nearby.

Sea lions basking on one of the docks in the harbor of Crescent City, California. (Photograph by author)

After diligent investigation nothing of interest or importance was found in the intervening distance, except for this:[1]

> Part of *Brother Jonathan*'s cargo was reportedly railroad iron. A number of items which appear to be just that were located in a pile between the wreck and Jonathan Rock, as if they might have spilled out of her fractured hull.

However, the rails were of no present commercial or historical value, even if they could be attributed to the lost ship. It thus became evident—not that additional confirmation was needed at this point—that generations of treasure seekers had been looking in the wrong place. Wadsley and Harrington knew that in the future the focus of DSR activity would be directly on the wreck site.

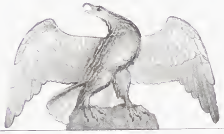
The weather began closing in, and the two DSR adventurers left Crescent City to pursue activities for the coming autumn and winter, including the raising of funds and participation in the defense of the "war" that the State of California continued to wage against the firm.

If there was a compensation, it was that the people of Crescent City had been very friendly, and there was something to be said for spending time in an area which has become a prime drawing card for tourists and lovers of nature. With a population of about 5,000, the town is the focal point for many who wish to enjoy nearby Redwood National Park and several other parks and nature preserves, or to fish, or simply to enjoy the coastline and interior lands, much of which has remained unchanged since the last century.

Crescent City itself offers many facilities including hotels, motels, restaurants, and stores. The harbor bespeaks of several activities including commercial and sport fishing, boat servicing, and pleasure cruising. Likely as not, anyone walking down one of the several wooden-planked boat docks may have to wait or make way for a group of huge sea lions which enjoy basking there—quite an opportunity for anyone with a camera.

[1] "1995 Field Investigation," chart by DSR. Description of [illegible] made to date.

Chapter Sixteen



DSR Goes for the Gold

The 1996 Explorations

Through the unstinting efforts of Fletcher C. Alford and his legal staff at Gordon & Rees, DSR went from one legal victory against the State of California to another. Attorneys for the State continued to press onward, although it was difficult for many outsiders to see what, if anything, the government of California would do with a broken-apart, deteriorated shipwreck 260 feet under the ocean, far offshore in an area that could only be accessed by use of sophisticated, professional diving equipment, and then only with danger and difficulty and only during certain times of the year. Increasingly, it seemed that the State had embarked on a fool's errand—backed by a seemingly unlimited amount of taxpayers' money—and was doing little more than harassing those involved with Deep Sea Research, Inc., most of whom were citizens of the same state (not that this seemed to matter). Peter Pelkofer, continuing as the lead attorney for the monolithic adversary, declared that there were about 1,600 recorded shipwrecks off the California coast,[1] but it was not at all clear if the state had any plans for recovering or restoring *any* of them.

Early in 1996, buoyed by the decision in their favor by Federal Judge Louis C. Bechtle, the principals of DSR renewed with great vigor their fund-raising and salvage plans. Additional capital was paid in, and it seemed very likely that 1996 would be *the* year. Despite legal victories by DSR, the David vs. Goliath contest continued in court, with DSR scrambling to raise funds for its defense, and the State of California using its seemingly inexhaustible supply of taxpayers' money to fight what seemed to be a case without logic on its side.

Bodega Bay

Plans were made for an early start to find the long sunken treasure in the 1996 season. To the extent that weather could be predicted, DSR received several opinions that early summer was expected to be milder than usual. Delays had consumed far too much time to this point, and lack of funds had prevented any recovery attempt the previous year, although valuable undersea mapping surveys had been made. Further, Federal Judge Bechtle had stated that DSR should validate its claims and status by actually beginning its recovery operation.

With a budget in place of $50,000, DSR contracted with Donald C. Siverts, owner of Undersea Graphics of Torrance, California, to provide the necessary equipment for a June recovery effort. Their 43-foot motor vessel, *Mother Goose*, with the one man *Snooper* submarine aboard, was to sail up the coastline from the Los Angeles area, north past San Francisco, to Crescent City near the Oregon border, a voyage anticipated to take five days. Meanwhile, the many other elements attendant to deep-sea recovery were taken care of—including insurance, arrangements for following a carefully made, archaeologically desirable salvage plan (which had been filed with the Court), and storage, conservation, and security for any artifacts that might be found. DSR designed and fabricated special hydraulic arms and other apparatus to use with the mini submarine in the recovery attempt.

All seemed to be in good order. Although June was not the usual window of opportunity, it continued to seem likely that the wind and waves would cooperate. As the *Mother Goose* headed north on June 4, weather reports from Crescent City were very favorable. Anticipation ran high.[2]

[1] As quoted by Mike McKenna [illegible], *Triplicate*, August 29, 1996. [illegible] June 18, 1995.

Then the unexpected happened: the weather turned nasty near San Francisco, waves were pushed to 14-foot heights by winds up to 35 knots per hour, and the *Mother Goose* salvage vessel was forced to put into Bodega Bay to seek safety. Ten long, tedious, expensive days were wasted there, about 50 miles north of the Golden Gate, far from the treasure site. Finally, when the weather cleared, the Undersea Graphics team, facing other commitments, headed home to Torrance. The DSR team waiting in Crescent City packed their bags and left town, having spent about $18,500 with no results.

Meanwhile, hopes remained high, and David Flohr and others raised more money. An attempt was planned for later in the summer during the traditional August and September weather window.

The Summer 1996 Explorations

In late August the long-anticipated recovery effort was restarted. This time, the weather all along the coast—not just at Crescent City—was cooperative. Additional funding was on hand. Operations were to be conducted with Delta Oceanographics' familiar 110-foot *M/V Cavalier* as the mother ship and command post. A crew of divers was hired, and the vessel's crew was briefed and instructed. Among the sub safety divers was an experienced professional named Wings Stocks, whose hiring proved to be particularly fortunate.

For undersea work the one-man *Snooper* mini-sub and the two-man *Delta*, each fitted with special mechanical recovery arms, were all set to go.

The First Day
(Tuesday, August 27, 1996)

In Eureka the principals of DSR gathered to travel together for the remaining 70-mile distance north to Crescent City. Directors Harvey Harrington, Sherman Harris, Jim Waddell, and David Flohr represented the investors, and were joined by Barry Sutton (security) and Dr. Willard Bascom (an accomplished writer and expert on undersea archaeology).[2] The group flew into their destination town, arriving at 5:40 p.m., where they were met by Lou Hill and Nancy Hanks Jones. From the Crescent City airstrip the treasure seekers took two cars to the office of Glen Smedley, the harbormaster. Smedley had been visited by Judge Bechtle during the course of his research and work on the court case. The harbormaster proved to be a very genial, helpful man, and he assisted in having the *M/V Cavalier* moor overnight at the nearby People's Ice Dock.

After checking in at the Super 8 Motel not far from the harbor, the DSR group and friends adjourned to a favorite local eatery, the Grotto, by which time 14 people were on hand to enjoy the repast. Subsequently, a reporter from the *Triplicate* newspaper joined the group, promising off the record confidentiality until clearance was given. Later in the evening, the DSR principals met with Sheriff Tim Maready, had a nice chat, and enjoyed seeing the interesting sports memorabilia in his office. The sheriff was to play an important part in the implementation of the court-specified security zone extending for a mile around the wreck site. The DSR crew came to appreciate that some of the friendliest people on earth resided in Crescent City. Virtually everyone wanted to help.

Later the same evening, the DSR group put their personal supplies near their bunks aboard the *Cavalier* and went to sleep on the ship. Some of the others, including the divers, stayed on shore at a motel. Despite the summer season, the air was chilly at night, and jackets were required.

All seemed to be in excellent order. The arrangements with Crescent City officials had been made in a cordial manner, the DSR group, ship crew, and divers were all enthusiastic, and the weather was favorable. Hopefully, this would be *the* trip that was successful. It was about time!

The Second Day
(Wednesday, August 28, 1996)

David Flohr, a Navy man from way back, had a fitful night, according to his journal entry. Perhaps it was the excitement and anticipation. He awoke about 4:00 a.m. and at an appropriate later time had a great breakfast in the ship's galley, telling the cook, Nancy, that while the others had come aboard to look for *treasure*, he had come only to partake of her *food*. It has often been said that one of the most essential elements of any fine shipboard experience is having excellent meals, and, obviously, the adventurers were already off to a good start!

By 8:10 a.m. the *Cavalier* had arrived over the wreck site, and the two-man *Delta* was lowered, with Chris Ijames at the controls and with Harvey Harrington as the passenger. The versatile mini-sub was on the bottom by 8:45. At 9:35 Don Siverts' one-man *Snooper* followed into the depths.

Around that time a small cabin cruiser penetrated the one-mile security zone and may have been a "spy." Security was tight aboard the *Cavalier*, and on the open sea. With golden treasure in the offing, there was no such thing as being too careful. However, the cruiser may have been a curiosity seeker or may have been unaware of the restricted area granted to DSR by the Federal Court. Sub safety diver Wings Stocks and his crew came aboard via a shuttle boat at 9:45.

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[1] The narrative of the August and September recoveries is adapted from DSR material, including briefs and reports by Fletcher C. Alford of Gordon & Rees, and from a daily log prepared by David L. Flohr. Specific quoted commentaries are from the Flohr log.

[2] Willard Bascom began his career in oceanography in 1945 when the science was in its infancy. He went on to participate in many undersea explorations and ventures, many of which were chronicled in his 1988 book, *The Crest of the Wave: Adventures in Oceanography*.

The *Delta* dropped the down line on the paddlewheel shaft, and it was later secured by divers. This provided a safety reference point for easy positioning on subsequent dives and would also serve as a down line for submarine safety divers, in the event that the sub operator got into a critical position where he needed assistance.

The water tended to be very murky and turbid, and sometimes visibility would be scarcely more than arm's length. Even under the best of conditions only a small undersea area could be seen at one time. No full view of the wreck was possible, and only by creating a grid, map, and photomosaic was it possible to study it carefully.

A map prepared earlier using videotape information and data from the DSR grid survey was at hand, but many details remained highly conjectural as virtually all of the upper wooden structure of the ship no longer existed, and machinery was strewn about. In fact, there was sufficient uncertainty, and the wreck was in such disarray, that it was later determined that what was first thought to be the bow of the ship was, in fact, the stern. There was little left from what had been the bow, probably because the ship had sunk bow-first and because the fore part of the ship had been torn apart in 1865. Certain parts of the ship's side were defined by fragments of original copper sheathing covering some remaining wood. Above the sheathing level virtually all wooden components had long since disappeared, although amidships there were some parts of what had once been the main deck. The horizontal driveshaft for the paddlewheels was at an angle across the ship, with three hubs at one end. The cast inscription, "MORGAN IRON WORKS / NEW YORK," identified the maker of the engine originally built in the 1840s for the *S.S. Atlantic*, but renovated and placed aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* when she was constructed in 1850. Elements of rails, pipes, boilers, heat exchangers, the heavy walking beam, and other machinery were seen near the center of the wreck.

The combination of poor visibility, lack of remaining ship structure, and the scattering of parts made it impossible to determine where gold coins and other valuables might be located, if, indeed, they were still on the wreck. It was decided to tie a reference down line to the steel paddlewheel driveshaft, close to where an earlier videotape had disclosed a large rectangular shape—perhaps a crate, or could it be a safe?

There were hazards on land (the legal eagles representing the State of California in its continuing battle against DSR) and, as it turned out, undersea as well. While the *Snooper* waited near the paddlewheel shaft, Wings Stocks came down with the safety reference down line. As he was preparing to make the line secure, another claimant came forward, an octopus! It wrapped its sucker-covered tentacles around his arm. After doing a double take and quickly figuring a strategy, the diver peeled the tentacles off, and the creature scooted away into the darkness.

After discussing what was known of the ship's history and layout, the treasure seekers determined that the best area to inspect would be fore of the paddlewheel shaft, extending toward where the bow once was.

At the end of the afternoon, the divers hung up their suits and joined the crew and DSR staff for a nice dinner aboard the *Cavalier* before heading back to Crescent City to spend the night. The DSR people and crew bunking on the ship watched videocassette movies in the vessel's lounge.

Two days had passed, but not a glimpse of treasure had been seen.

The Third Day
(Thursday, August 29, 1996)

David Flohr noted in his journal that the early morning was cool and foggy aboard the *M/V Cavalier* riding at anchor. After the usual wake-up, breakfast, and other dawn activities by the crew, the *Snooper* went into the water above the wreck site about 7:30 a.m., followed shortly by the *Delta*. The plan for the day called for *Snooper* to prowl around the area in front of the paddlewheel shaft and to try to find boxes or even a safe for later inspection and pickup by divers. Anything heavy would be wrapped with lines and later hoisted to the surface by a hydraulic winch. Piloted by Dave Slater the little submarine covered much of the area, but maneuvering was hampered by a failed sideways thruster. Much hope was pinned on finding a large safe of the Dobler type said to have been put aboard when the *Brother Jonathan* was built in 1850. However, considering that the ship was extensively renovated later—including a virtually complete reconstruction to its hull up in 1861—the safe may have been replaced. However, it was a virtual certainty that some type of safe or strongbox was aboard and perhaps even several of them. Treasure was always kept under lock and key in the Gold Rush steamer era as hazards were many. Soon thereafter the *Snooper* found a rectangular shape that might be a safe, and its location was noted for further investigation.

Meanwhile, undersea exploration by open submersible was anything but easy. The constant current—which ran steadily at an angle crosswise to the wreck—made navigation and positioning difficult for both the *Snooper* and the *Delta*. Deteriorated old nets from fishing vessels were draped on various projections—including what remained of the walking beam—and were a nuisance. If caught in a certain way they could be hazardous to the submersibles and divers alike. However, no doubt their decrepit condition was beneficial to aquatic life, for no evidence was seen of fish or turtles having been trapped in them. Three times the *Delta* was swept into the old nets by the unrelenting bottom current. Fortunately it easily extricated itself.

On this and other days, visibility was always limited by swirling suspended matter, sometimes called "sea dust." The ocean was always restless. Remaining wooden surfaces of

The bag filled with gold coins, a dream of treasure come true! The cloth bag in the open position is shown on deck of the *Cavalier* moments after it was brought up from the bottom of the sea. (DSR photograph)

he did was to light a cigarette. Perhaps he had seen nothing. Or perhaps he had seen a lot. No one knew. Harvey would be a good poker player.

Meanwhile, Barry Sutton, in charge of security, reached over to the pre-deck of the *Delta* to take two bungee cords off two light yellow-green plastic bags encased in a small black net sack. He picked up the bags and gently—well, sort of—let them drop a short distance to the deck of the *Cavalier*. The audible and unmistakable *clink* of coins electrified the wide-eyed onlookers!

Barry knelt and pulled the pelican hook which held the first bag closed, then pried it open. As the sides of the bag spread apart, the opening revealed a mass of gold coins! Double eagles were in profusion! Singles, many in clusters of two, or three, or four, even a "conglomerate" of 25! Some were as brilliant as the day they were struck!

The DSR officials and others experienced a golden dream come true. For the next hour they counted what they had found—amounting to 564 coins in all, and every one of them a $20 double eagle. A survey of the dates revealed that they were minted from 1860 up to the year that the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* pulled away from the San Francisco dock on its last voyage, 1865. The later dated ones appeared to be in mint-fresh condition. A look at the reverses showed that most bore the tiny distinguishing letter "S"—right from the San Francisco Mint.

Each coin was carefully rinsed in fresh water. It was quickly seen—and joyfully so—that corrosion from immersion in salt water was minimal or even nonexistent, although some pieces were encrusted with mineral matter. No "sea-water" coins here! Over 46 *pounds* of gold coins were carefully placed in small inert plastic bags, transferred to trays, and stored in a locked cabinet to await a final confirming count. Precise enumeration could be done later when everyone's heart dropped from their throats back to their chests. David Flohr noted in his journal:

> What a moment—what a scene—what a great, unimaginable sensation—what a thrill—a realization of joy on the prospect of a great golden moment!

After the peak of excitement passed, everyone realized that, indeed, life would go on. The years of work done by Deep Sea Research was now worthwhile. The patience and endurance of the investors had resulted in a grand-slam home run!

DSR had overcome almost impossible odds and had successfully salvaged one of only two sunken ships in history to yield a significant quantity of valuable United States gold coins, and the only ship on the West Coast to have this distinction. All aboard the *M/V Cavalier* knew that they would forever share and savor the memories of a search the likes of which many have dreamed, but which few have experienced. Deep Sea Research's niche in the Pantheon of treasure hunters was secure. History had been made!

After an especially nice dinner aboard ship—well, *any* dinner by cook Nancy would have been nice, but this one was immersed in a special glow—Barry Sutton, Jim Wadsley, Sherman Harris, Dave Slater, and Curt Siverts gathered around a table in the lounge to recount and inventory the coins. David Flohr kept a ledger to record what was found as Barry read aloud the date of each piece and noted the mintmark, which was usually an "S." Harvey Harrington had supplied a few pre-printed sheets for this purpose, never dreaming that they would find so many coins that they would run out of paper! By 1:30 the next morning the inventory was completed, and about a third of the coins had been photographed. The final tally stood at 561 coins vs. the initial count of 564.

Everyone went to bed and, presumably, had sweet, *golden* dreams—except for the indefatigable Barry Sutton—in charge of security—who decided to stay up all night to

Just a *small part* of the treasure trove of golden double eagles rescued from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. Bob Johnson carefully inserts a coin into a protective envelope while Sherman Harris looks on. (DSR photograph)

keep an eye on the double-locked cabinet in which the treasure was stored.

The Fifth Day
(Saturday, August 31, 1996)

It was another day. The sun was soon to rise. Life had gone on, as expected.

Late the preceding evening, the four principals of DSR—Flohr, Harrington, Wadsley, and Harris—had taken a few minutes time out from gold coin counting to have a meeting to plan future strategy. Bad weather had been forecast to hit the Crescent City area soon, after which five stormy days were predicted.

At early dawn, with darkness still in the western sky, the *S.S. Cavalier* slipped her mooring lines in the town harbor and headed to the wreck site, arriving at 6:15. Don Siverts readied the *Snooper,* lowered her to the water at 7:00 a.m., and five minutes later was on the wreck site, and quickly found the treasure spot by following the divers' reference line.

He reconnoitered the area where the coins had been discovered the day before, using a sub-mounted video camera and a hand-held electronic camera. Emphasis was on photographing the "glory hole" or "sweet spot"—call it what you will—to see what else might be there.

Meanwhile, the two divers—Wings Stocks and Kendall Raine—arrived at the mother ship about 9:00, coming from Crescent City aboard their own boat, the *Xanadu.* They jumped aboard the *Cavalier* for a conference, then returned to their vessel to suit up, a process that usually takes about an hour, with the assistance of Jeremy Pfiester, a helper known as a tender. Pfiester also acted as the helmsman of the *Xanadu* when the divers were busy on board or were in the water below. Minutes clicked by, and as 10:00 drew near, the seas were rising, with the waves showing signs of becoming even rougher. At 10:30 the diving mission was canceled—again the treasure recovery had been pre-empted by the tried and true, and for DSR, the inviolable "safety first" rule. Sometimes safety considerations could be annoying, especially when double eagles were on the sea floor just waiting to be picked up!

Don Siverts, aboard the *Snooper* at the wreck site and still taking pictures, was told of the change in plans and was instructed to come to the surface. By this time the waves were cresting uncomfortably high, and it took a brilliant display of balance and seamanship by the crew of the *Cavalier* to land the mini-sub safely back on board. Every once in a while the sea reminded the treasure hunters that *it* was in charge, as it had been on the fateful day of July 30, 1865.

Soon thereafter, Siverts stepped out of his protective suit, hit the rewind button on his video camera, and headed to the tech shed. Everyone awaited the next episode of the melodrama to be thrown on the screen, and all hoped for something spectacular to assuage the sting of not being able to return to the golden treasure site to bring up more coins.

The projection was started. The videotape started to roll. David Flohr later wrote this in his journal:

> Needless to say the film was spectacular. Don's camera captured an area where the purser's office was located on the ship and where we most likely would find our gold. Sure enough, the film recorded a dazzling array of what seemed to be much more gold than we had recovered yesterday. There were literally stacks and clusters of gold coins, from the remains of a larger than expected box, probably of wrought iron.
>
> There were coins all over the place, some safely nestled in the remnants of the box, others poised precariously on the edge of a metal surface next to an edge overlooking dark depths below. It was a stunning scene of enormous golden treasure, literally hundreds more coins awaiting the expert group of our divers! We could hardly believe our eyes—these coins were right out in the open!
>
> We were all spellbound as Don related on the audio track of the tape what he was seeing. Other likely looking boxes appeared off to one side and were of the same general dimensions as the one holding the golden trove we so eagerly ogled on the video screen. In one scene, an octopus arm was seen slithering across the coin-filled area. What great prospect this was—can you imagine reading in print a thrilling adventure story about a huge octopus protecting the *Brother Jonathan's* gold from pillagers!
>
> Don then showed some of the additional scenes he shot with his hand-held camera. There, clearly displayed, was a small safe with the combination lock right smack in the middle of it. Jim Wadsley thought it might weigh a ton or so—easily within the capacity of our onboard hydraulic winch. All was set for another round of excitement—only if the weather would cooperate.
>
> How amazing!

Soon thereafter—as the treasure seekers gathered for lunch—reality set in. Everyone knew the weather was improbable, and there was every expectation it would not get better for the next several days. It was foreseen that if this year's search had to be abandoned, the hoard of golden treasure would be exposed to the clutches of any scavengers and rogue divers who were able to gain access to the wreck. By this time the recovery had gathered a lot of coverage in the press, not to overlook the continuing saga in the courtroom.

The owner of the *Cavalier* had other commitments to honor, and the mother ship was scheduled to leave Crescent City before the weather was predicted to improve. The earliest the ship could return would be September 12, placing the wreck site at risk for nearly two weeks.

David Flohr noted in his journal that his brother-in-law Sherman Harris had to leave Crescent City to attend to matters back in his home town of Palm Springs, which added to David's declining hopes. However, there was a bright side. Over 500 beautiful golden double eagles had been recovered and were safely locked away and—just possibly—the weather might improve before the *Cavalier* had to go home. A few days remained in the schedule.

The Sixth Day

(Sunday, September 1, 1996)

There was a mix-up in communications on Sunday morning, and when the divers in their motel on shore made a call to the *Cavalier* at 4:00 a.m. to see if the crew was scheduled to head out to sea at the usual time, the telephone was not answered. The divers tried again a half hour later, but still the *Cavalier* could not be roused.

David Flohr awoke an hour or so later aboard the *Cavalier* and wondered why the crew had not heard from the divers. He placed a call to the motel where they were staying, but there was no answer. It was later learned that at the motel someone had forgotten to make a connection to permit the shipboard telephone to be heard. Neither group had been able to reach the other.

Drat! Although against all expectations the weather was quite nice in the Crescent City harbor, it was hours later than the usual departure, and neither the crew nor the divers were ready!

A short time thereafter, co-ordination resumed, and the treasure seekers headed out to sea, still far behind schedule, but with optimism that there would be some time left to work advantageously.

More trouble was in the offing. In the open water outside of the harbor, the seas were running rough—generally 10 to 13 feet, sometimes up to 15 feet or more, in eight-second intervals, driven by a wind of 24 to 32 knots, gusting to 36. With at least the satisfaction that the missed communications of early morning had not resulted in any loss of diving time, the crew returned to port.

Harvey Harrington, David Flohr, and Jim Wadsley discussed their options for the balance of the operation. With the mother ship, submarines, divers, and crew members presently still on hand, and with at least a slight expectation that there might be a break in the weather, all hoped that more coin recoveries could be made. It was unanimously determined not to leave the exposed treasure unprotected for any length of time, lest someone slip in under cover of night or fog and raid the site.

In Flohr's words:

> We stated firmly that we were not going to leave until we were either finished recovering all the gold in the area, the likely looking [illegible] and the [illegible] area, or had a permanent on-site watch. We then discussed how we could achieve these objectives. Our first assumption was the loss of the *Cavalier*. Jim Johnston, the owner, had a contract obligation to be back on the job for one of his regular customers, Oceaneering, by the end of the week.... We knew that *Delta* and *Snooper* could stay in Crescent City, but we would have to have a mother ship. So the key was the *Cavalier*. The prospect was no ship, and we were to be on guard on site until mid-September when the *Cavalier* could return.
>
> A factor in our favor was that ship-owner Jim Johnston had a keen interest in our treasure recovery project. This, plus my offer to write a check then and there for the additional few days convinced Jim that he should call his wife Katie to advise her of the delayed return and ask her to notify his customer of the delay.

The matter seemed to be settled to the satisfaction of all of the treasure seekers.

There was still time left in the daylight hours. The DSR officials and crew decided to take another look at the wave conditions offshore. Perhaps if they were not good for human divers, they would still be satisfactory for the durable mini-subs. Doug Privitt had demonstrated that the mechanical claw on the *Delta* could be manipulated so precisely that a dime could be plucked off of the ship's deck and placed on the shoe of a bystander. Of course, this was not a fast way to retrieve gold coins from the ocean bottom, but the *Delta* did have the advantage that it was not subjected to the 15-minute bottom-time limit placed upon exposed divers. Moreover, the careful use of this claw would continue the DSR policy of minimizing the disturbance to the wreck—thus preserving it for the unlikely event that some undersea archeologist or even the State of California, fortified with the necessary budget of millions of dollars, ever wanted to preserve the scattered wreck and make it a historic landmark. The ship was essentially as DSR had found it on October 1, 1993—minus the gold coins and minus whatever artifacts the Del Norte Historical Society had on its "want list." All items brought to the surface had been small, with nothing in the way of machinery or metal structural elements.

Now that the *M/V Cavalier* was not going to sail off into the sunset and could remain in Crescent City for the next few days, the DSR group formulated plans to continue the recovery program. The *Delta* and *Snooper* were ready to go, and divers Wings Stocks and Kendall Raine, assisted by Jeremy Pfiester as their tender, were eager to see what could be found.

The waves remained high for the rest of the day, and everyone hoped there would be a better opportunity tomorrow.

The Seventh Day

(Monday, September 2, 1996)

It was Labor Day, but with no rest from labor in the offing for Harrington, Wadsley, Flohr, the ship's crew, and the divers. Conditions in Crescent City harbor seemed favorable, and the *M/V Cavalier* headed outward to travel the nine miles across the water to the wreck site. The *Xanadu* with its diving crew followed for about three miles, but the seas and wind again proved to be too heavy, and it turned back. A couple miles further, and the captain of the *Cavalier* also called it a day.

Upon returning to Crescent City, everyone learned the sorrowful news that the rough seas of the day before had sunk two vessels in the area—fishing boats measuring 53

and 72 feet respectively—unfortunately with loss of life. No heavenly arm from above had bound the restless waves, and the sea had asserted its dominance once again.

The rest of Labor Day was spent packaging the coins so that they could be turned over to Brink's armored car service for transport to a bank in the San Francisco area. An inventory was also made of items on the "want list" of the Del Norte Historical Society and Museum, which already had been filled in with a good degree of success. No valuable artifacts had been found, but there were quite a few interesting tools, utensils, and everyday items that would fit nicely into a display. Actually, there were *too many* such artifacts available on the wreck—such as hundreds of small unmarked white china plates of little or no historical value and thousands (millions?) of nails and tacks. These were left on the sea bottom.

The Eighth Day

(Tuesday, September 3, 1996)

The *M/V Cavalier* and its occupants left Crescent City harbor at 5:30 a.m. and headed for the wreck site, with *Xanadu* and the divers following behind. Weather permitting, the plan called for the *Delta* to be down on the wreck site by 7:00 a.m. to illuminate the area where the coins had been found previously, so that divers could remove them from any harm. Luck was with the salvors, and the waves had dropped to only six feet or so, at 12-second intervals, driven by a 10- to 12-knot breeze. For the coastal reaches off of Crescent City, this is almost a *calm* sea! However, a report from the *Delta* revealed that at 260 feet below the surface the current was strong and visibility was low.

By 9:30 divers Wings Stocks and Kendall Raine reported that they had recovered some items, and that a bag of "goodies" had been filled. Soon hoisted up to the deck, the sack was opened by Barry Sutton to reveal another golden landscape of coins! This time around, there were at least two $5 half eagles in addition to a proliferation of double eagles. A fragment of the original coin storage box was also recovered. A study of the fragment suggested that the box had been bound with wrought iron, or at least had been reinforced with iron on its corners—a true treasure chest.

A new diver, Steve Gamble, arrived, was given a briefing, and asked to go down to the wreck to pick up any remaining exposed gold coins. He was on the sea floor by 4:30 p.m., with the *Delta* waiting nearby. In about 15 minutes of searching, only seven more coins were found before his allotted diving time period expired. The *Delta* remained on the wreck, and using its clever claw arm was able to gingerly pick up 13 more coins.

At day's end the DSR group realized that easy pickings had come to an end, and any future discoveries would be found elsewhere on the wreck or perhaps in one of the cargo boxes and other remains scattered among the debris.

It was decided that the fragment of a coin box brought to the surface was from a container that originally measured about 30 by 20 inches. It seemed likely that coins were transported in iron-bound boxes, rather than in safes as had been supposed. The next effort would be to try to find some other boxes of like dimensions.

The Ninth Day

(Wednesday, September 4, 1996)

At 5:30 a.m. the two diesel engines of the *M/V Cavalier* began their customary growl. The work day was starting. After a hearty breakfast, the crew and three DSR executives—David Flohr, Harvey Harrington, and Jim Wadsley—(Sherman Harris remained away tending to business in Palm Springs) headed out to sea, with a gorgeous sunrise displaying hues of white, dark pink, and red. A fine time seemed to be in the offing.

At 7:30 the little *Snooper* went into the water with the assignment of making a film record of potential coin strongboxes, including one recently spotted and soon called the "hot box," which Wings Stocks had poked and found to be quite solid. It was hoped to bring it to the surface, but to keep it sealed even though it might be filled with treasure. This was to be reserved for a "video event" in which the media would be invited to join the DSR staff to share in the excitement when the long-hidden contents were revealed for all to see. By this time, the *Brother Jonathan* recovery effort had been widely chronicled in newspapers nationwide.

Meanwhile, the *Delta* sub was launched and went down to the wreck with another federal "arrest warrant" and a meter stick for confirming calculations, all necessary to maintain DSR's exclusive license for recovery and to maintain the security zone in the sea near the sunken ship.

Wings Stocks was on the sea bottom, and after some looking around he was able to find 14 more loose gold coins. This raised the count to more than 850 found to date.

Meanwhile, the time table was coming to an end. Wings and the DSR officials conferred and agreed that the "hot box" could be transferred to a recovery crate and then hoisted to the surface in what would be the last major operation of the season. Plans were made in this direction, to be implemented on the next two days, these to be the final trips of the *Cavalier* to the wreck site. Nancy—the cook who had won such high acclaim—was driven to the airport, and soon she was on her way home. Taking her place for the short remaining duration was another familiar face: Kathleen Wadsley, Jim's wife. Kathleen had her own sea credentials, having once single-sailed a boat on a long ocean voyage.

Among other business, the remaining recovered coins—bringing the grand total to 875—were delivered to Brink's armored car service in a rendezvous made at the Coast Guard station in Crescent City. Meanwhile, security precautions continued to be maintained, and a "spymobile" which

Harvey Harrington (left) reviews a sketch of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* with Don Siverts aboard the recovery ship, the *Cavalier.* (DSR photograph)

had been cruising around the dock area with no apparent business to conduct was watched carefully.

What with an octopus or two undersea at the wreck, a "spymobile," a sneaky speedboat with unauthorized photographers aboard, and other cloak-and-dagger and adventure aspects of the past couple of years, the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* might make a good theme for a James Bond movie!

The Tenth Day
(Thursday, September 5, 1996)

The day dawned bright and cheery with more good weather in the offing. The *Cavalier* left Crescent City at 5:30 a.m. and hoped to have salvers on the wreck site by 7:00. However, Don Siverts persuaded Harvey Harrington to let his son Curt take the *Snooper* down for a sightseeing dive as a reward for his hard work during the expedition. The *Delta* went down as well, but found that the visibility was very poor, and little could be done in the way of filming. On its second dive the *Delta* carried marine archaeologist Dr. Willard Bascom on a trip to the site, when luck changed and he was able to get some excellent footage.

Down below the divers wrestled with the much discussed "hot box," but could only budge it slightly, losing a pry bar in the process. The wind was rising and the waves were kicking up, so the crew headed back to Crescent City.

The Eleventh Day
(Friday, September 6, 1996)

The time had come. This was to be the last day of the diving season. Already some of the participants in the 1996 treasure hunt had left for home, but those remaining wanted to make good use of the coming hours.

The crew and DSR officials awoke at 5:00 a.m., the usual time that all were to be out of their bunks. At 5:25 the *Cavalier* left the Crescent City dock and headed toward the breakwater, then out into the vastness of the Pacific Ocean.

In due course, David Slater went aboard the *Delta* as pilot, joined by David Flohr as observer and operator of a hand-held camera. It was dive number 3,902 in the lifetime log of the *Delta*—including dozens of dives for the DSR project—and it was a testimony to its owners and operators and the policies they followed that each and every dive had been conducted without unfavorable incident. The plan called for divers Kendall Raine and Steve Gamble to attach a steel cable and two loops to the iron "hot box" safe—or whatever this solid, intriguing-appearing box was. An airbag was to be fastened as well, and inflated from air tanks on the *Delta.* Once that was done, the divers would release a pop-up line and buoy to the surface, after which they would decompress and come aboard the mother ship. Meanwhile, the *Delta* would come up as well. Aboard the ship, the treasure seekers would use an hydraulic winch and crane to haul the safe from the depths.

As soon as the *Delta* reached the area of the wreck, Slater and Flohr saw that the visibility was very low, and it was difficult to determine the sub's position relative to the wreck. Nearly an hour was spent until the proper location near the purser's office was reached. About a half hour later, the men in the sub received word that the two divers were on their way down, a descent requiring about seven minutes. Meanwhile, the bright lights on the *Delta* illuminated the eerie undersea vista of shadowy boxes, ship engine components, and other objects covered with "sea dust."

The divers reached the *Delta,* took the tanks for inflating the air bag, then disappeared in the murky current to conduct their operation with the "hot box." The rigging was attached as planned, and before long the divers and sub each went back to the surface.

David Flohr described what happened next:

> I had been down three hours on the *Delta,* and it was wonderful to come back up and get my lungs full of fresh air. The divers' pop-up line had surfaced with an inflated red marker on it.... The *Cavalier's* crew of six or seven got a hold on the one-half inch nylon line and started to pull. The first 50 or so feet came up easily, then something happened which portended trouble. The line did not go straight down as we expected for an object being lifted off the ocean floor 260 feet below. Instead, it let off at as much as a 45° angle. The worst was yet to come. After more pulling on the line, it parted—and our mysterious treasure safe was lost.
>
> Jim Wadsley couldn't bear the sight and turned to walk forward.... However, the airbag which was attached to the box was not damaged, and moments later it slowly rose, carrying the precious treasure box, and it was soon spotted under the water. There was hope! I looked about 30 feet from the ship and, yes, there was a white airbag rising to the surface with a line attached. All hell broke loose! Cheers and shouts! Indeed, the wire cable was intact, and the box had been secured....
>
> Slowly and surely the box was lifted by crane. As soon as the bag cleared the ocean surface all eyes drilled onto the next object. No one was disappointed for there—below the inflated airbag—was the most beautiful rust-covered black box I had ever seen. It

> dripped a stream of water and was upside down—but was gingerly lifted across the water as all observers waited with bated breath to see it come aboard. After it was safely secured on the afterdeck everyone with cameras jumped to take pictures.
>
> The box was 24 inches by 30 inches by 35 inches and had originally been clad in wrought iron. This metal had long since turned to ferrous oxide which gave the box a rough coat about one-inch thick. Some of this fell off and exposed a well-made wooden container with heavy duty cast iron wheels, which still turned. The hinges on top were inside the box, and a key-type lock was installed on the front under a U-shaped handle. We estimated its weight at 400 to 500 pounds. Oh, what we would have given to know what was inside!

The crew secured the potential treasure chest under blankets and took it into port, where it was placed in a large box obtained from a commercial fishing supply depot. All set to be the "media event" mystery treasure, the box was shipped under secure arrangements to a third party, Marine World of Africa[1] in Vallejo, California, for storage and later examination. In due course, with cameras whirring, everyone would see a golden array of double eagles which had been hidden for well over a century. Or, so it was hoped.

While it would be nice to relate that the envisioned scenario happened, reality was different, a rare coin version of *Casey at the Bat.* Despite great expectations, there was no joy in Mudville—or, rather, at DSR headquarters. Upon being opened the box-safe was found to contain some clothing and miscellaneous hardware, but no coins or any other items of value. Oh, well!

Thus ended the 1996 search. By any accounting, the vast array of $20 gold double eagles found a few days earlier had made it all worthwhile. A fantastic treasure was at hand!

Reflecting on the year's activities, Harvey Harrington commented:[2]

> From the beginning I felt those who had looked for the *Brother Jonathan* were searching in the wrong place. My convictions led me to look elsewhere, we found it exactly where I thought it was. This fact, plus proving there was enough "treasure" to warrant the substantial monetary investment and years spent in search, made it all worthwhile.
>
> Actually, finding the gold on the bottom, though memorable, was not that surprising to me, as I always *knew* it was there. And, to conclude, the sight of the gold is not "where it's at" for me personally, but rather the search for and recovery of it, and all that it entails.

And, once the *Brother Jonathan* project is done, what would Harrington do next?:

> My own interest and quest will never wane, I guess I will go on looking, even *up there!*

Barry Sutton Reminisces

Barry Sutton shared some of his memories concerning the finding of the wreck:[3]

> In 1982, when I was with the California State Highway Patrol, I served in the Crescent City area. About that time I met Pat Wilson—who also worked for the State—and we became friends and fishing pals. During this time I had heard many stories about the lost ship—such as its wreck being positioned on an undersea ledge and ready to fall into a deep canyon, and similar tales.
>
> In Crescent City all of the fishermen have depth finders which are used for many things, including keeping away from snags and obstacles on the bottom, these being called "hangs," as nets would hang up on them. As nets used by some of the Crescent City fishermen are over 300 feet long and are very expensive, the avoiding of "hangs" becomes important business. I had a black book with such "hangs" marked in depth numbers.
>
> After retiring from the Highway Patrol I operated the *Top Cat* charter boat. About 1987 I was contacted by a company known as Sea Epics. They wanted me to take their people out with some equipment to search for the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan.*
>
> After Sea Epics was disbanded, I became involved with the new company, Deep Sea Research. The people at DSR came to Crescent City several times and I took them out to Jonathan Rock, where they thought the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* was located.
>
> Over a period of time I heard many stories from various local fishermen, including one account in which a net was snagged, and nearly an hour was spent trying to loosen it. Finally it came up in shreds, but at the bottom of the net was a *16-foot section of brass rail.* I really got excited, as he said this happened near Jonathan Rock! On closer questioning, the fisherman said that it was to the south of the rock. I suggested that I could take my boat out there with some people on a charter and catch a few fish. "[illegible] good fishing out there," the fisherman said, "but whatever it is on the bottom, it sure tears up nets." For the typical fisherman who operated a ship with nets, such a spot was to be avoided at all costs. I entered the hang location numbers in my book. I was convinced that this might be the *Brother Jonathan,* but in discussing it with Sea Epics officials I recall that the idea was

The much anticipated "treasure box" and its airbag being hoisted from the sea. (Barry Sutton photograph).

[1] Later renamed Six Flags Marine World.

[2] 1998 letter to the author.

[3] Adapted and paraphrased from interviews between Chris Karstedt and Barry Sutton, December 1998 and January 1999, supplemented by information provided by Harvey Harrington and notes made by Barry Sutton in May 1997.

dismissed—"It can't be the *Brother Jonathan*, she didn't have brass rails." So, that was the end of my excitement.

Upon hearing a second story of a net-snagging wreck, I entered those location numbers as well. After I met Harvey Harrington, I gave all of these loran numbers to him, and he carried them among his pocket notes.

In 1991 I also worked with Deep Sea Research, who had an expert from the East Coast—Arnie Carr. He came with a side-scan sonar device. Using the *Top Cat* charter boat we spent a whole day going back and forth at Jonathan Rock. Then, toward the end of the afternoon, we were south of Jonathan Rock near the site of the hung-up nets. By that time it was very stormy at sea, waves were crashing with white-tops, and we could only spend a little time there. We did get a sonar picture of a 200-foot target in the area, but the roughness on the surface prevented us from obtaining a sharp image. We knew it was some sort of a wreck, but whether it was a barge or what we had no idea.

The next year, 1993, DSR put a big project together, and hired an expert to do the navigation. I recall spending four days at Jonathan Rock, as there was a convincing target near the bottom in that area, one of the images on our side-scan sonar search from the preceding year. (This would have been [illegible].)

Every day the two minisubs, *Delta* and *Snooper*, would go down into the water, and each day there would be a report such as: "We can't find anything but rock. That is all we can see. We have been all over the rock."

Earlier Harvey Harrington and I discussed the idea that the search be moved to the site of the 200-foot target previously located. There was some disagreement among the others, as I remember, but finally we convinced everyone to at least give this site a try. We gave the loran numbers to the captain of the *Cavalier*. He then headed south and went over the area in several directions, getting some really good side-scan printout recordings. You could see what looked like a sidewheel steamer, and you could see the shaft with the paddlewheel hubs. After all the hours of looking, it was a thrill for me on October [illegible], 1993 to have the side-scan sonar and the sub both confirm the loran numbers that I had given DSR out of my hang book [illegible] years earlier to be the location where the long-sought *Brother Jonathan* lay.

About the gold coins, let me tell you what I remember about Harvey Harrington. Of course, you could check with Harvey and he would probably tell it differently. I suppose we all have slightly different experiences and observations.

Harvey was down in the *Delta* submarine. In fact, I think he was in the submarine more than he was on the surface of the ship *Cavalier*, [illegible]. Harvey was the second passenger, while the guy who piloted it was at its center. When the sub came up, the pilot was always the first out of the hatch.

On this particular day, Harvey was second man out as always. He walked across the deck of the *Cavalier* and said, "Oh, I've got to have a cigarette!" And he borrowed one from me.

He was standing there just watching those [illegible] down for minutes at least, smoking and talking. Then he said, "You know, that last trip through there, I know I spotted a gold coin."

All conversation around Harvey stopped. I mean, it was quiet. Everybody looked at Harvey and then David Flohr looked at me and said, "Is he serious?" And I said, "Harvey wouldn't kid about something like that."

And he wasn't kidding!

Pat Wilson Remembers

Pat Wilson, long-time resident of Crescent City and captain of the boat, *Sea Chicken*, shares several recollections of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* recovery efforts:[1]

> Prior to Deep Sea Research there was an outfit called Brother Jonathan Company, founded in 1970, for which my father-in-law was the electronic technician and an acting member of the group. However, the company was not successful in its search. My father-in-law gave me a book about shipwrecks in the Pacific Northwest, which whetted my appetite for treasure hunting.
>
> Through Barry Sutton, I personally became involved with Deep Sea Research and in 1991 was hired as a security guard. David Flohr asked me to work with the group as shore support. With my captain's license I ferried men and equipment out to the various research vessels which were plying the local waters in search of the *Brother Jonathan*.
>
> Back in 1993 we began a concerted effort towards locating the *Brother Jonathan*. The searchers had been spending a great deal of time around what is now called Brother Jonathan Rock or just Jonathan Rock, which used to be called Dancer Rock. That was supposedly where the *Brother Jonathan* hit. A lot of people thought that the *Brother Jonathan* would be found very close to that spot. Around that time I helped take many people, including DSR investors, out to the area being explored. I remember that one time it was very foggy, and it was hard to find the *Cavalier* at its mooring near Jonathan Rock, a situation complicated by the seas running about 13 feet high! Later that year the wreck was located at a different spot.
>
> Finally in 1996 the DSR crew used the *Cavalier* and a one-man sub, and finally began recoveries from the wreck. I remember when I saw for the first time some of the gold coins that had been brought up from the sea bottom. I'd never really seen gold outside of trinkets for my wife. But when you see a $20 gold piece from across the deck 40 or 50 feet away, it doesn't shine, but there's a *glow* about it! I can appreciate the emotions of avarice that men have had in their hearts about gold throughout history.
>
> While working with DSR had its very exciting moments, it is important to remember that treasure seeking is a very tedious profession, and one that has dangers, such as uncertain conditions during ocean storms. However, it was a real pleasure working with the professionals of the Deep Sea Research company. Here in Crescent City, the news of the finding of the *Brother Jonathan* was very exciting, and if even more gold can be found, it may be one of the greatest treasures of the world. A lot of people in Del Norte County will now learn for the first time the true history of the ship they have heard so much about, and they will have the chance to view many items brought up from the wreck.

Numismatic Considerations

The recovered coins were shipped by Brink's to its vault in the San Francisco area. W.E. ("Gene") Seton was tapped by DSR to be its numismatic advisor. Seton, from Port Townsend, Washington, had been a collector for many years

[1] Interview with Chris Karstedt, October 1998.

and was experienced in the many intricacies of the rare coin field. Not that it was relevant to the selection of Seton, but it will be recalled that Port Townsend had played a role in the saga of the *Brother Jonathan* via the escapades of passenger Victor Smith.

While it can be said by an unknowing observer that a double eagle is a double eagle, the numismatist knows that beyond that point there are many other considerations needed to translate a given coin into a cash realization in the marketplace. The grade of each coin is very important, and as noted in Chapter 6, the value between a lightly worn specimen and one that is in gem Mint State-65 can be tremendous. Rarity plays a part, and market demand is likewise a significant factor. Gene Seton worked with DSR on all of these matters.

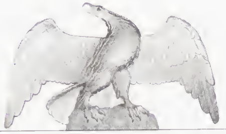
Meanwhile, as the title to the coins was still a matter of dispute—as the State of California doggedly pursued DSR from one court to another—the recovered coins were placed under the care of the Federal Court, with DSR allowed to perform conservation procedures and arrange for security.

Robert Johnson, a long-time professional numismatist from San Francisco, was named by the court to carefully rinse and remove accreted matter from certain of the gold coins, taking extreme care not to "clean" or use abrasives or in any way detract from their value to a rare coin collector.[1] The results proved to be outstanding, and calciferous matter and accretions were dissolved away, leaving not a trace. The coins were each excellent examples of their date, variety, and grade.

Now, planning turned to the future, to the 1997 season and the prospect of making additional recoveries from the wreck site.

[1] Johnson had been an important dealer in rare coins since the 1940s. In the 1990s he and Santa Barbara, CA dealer Ron Gillio were consultants for Butterfield and Butterfield, California fine arts auctioneers.

Chapter Seventeen



More Treasures and Artifacts

Getting Ready for Summer 1997

After the 1996 explorations had concluded with great success, David Flohr, the "money man" and treasurer for Deep Sea Research, Inc., continued to raise investment capital. Soon thereafter, additional funds totaling more than $500,000 were paid in. Harvey Harrington continued in his position as director of offshore operations for DSR. In preparation for the salvage operations planned for August 1997 in Crescent City, Harrington went from his home in Florida, cross country to Seattle, and spent a month with ship charter companies, diving operators, and others negotiating and arranging details for what was intended to be the most extensive recovery to date.

It was hoped to spend a full month on the wreck site and to employ a larger team with saturation diving (SAT) equipment, permitting divers to work on the treasure ship for hours at a time without needing to resurface.

Unfortunately, DSR's continuing legal battle with the State of California forced a delay in contracting for equipment, and the recovery project which was originally scheduled for 30 days in August was shortened to 15. However, much was accomplished in the end—even if the timetable was a compromise.

Actual diving operations in the summer of 1997 took place from August 20—by which time all was set in place—until the 31st, after which several days were required for the divers' decompression and other follow up activities.

The *American Salvor*

In due course Harrington arranged for the impressive 213 foot steel-hull, multiple deck *M/V American Salvor,* owned by Crowley Maritime Services of Seattle, to be the mother ship.[1] The vessel had been built in 1971 with roll-on, roll-off cargo transport, but had been converted in 1979 for heavy-duty ship salvage operations with powerful winches and other equipment including a 10-ton hydraulic crane. Departure of the *American Salvor* from Seattle was scheduled for Friday, August 15, for arrival on site Sunday, August 17.

A special four-point mooring system enabled the *American Salvor* to remain centered over the dive site and continually make required adjustments by way of cables attached by 8,000-pound anchors by two-inch wire ropes. For the project Crowley furnished its most experienced captains, John Emmel and Scott Murdock, and a qualified crew including Rodger Melton (first mate), Phillip Smith (second mate), Eugene Murns, Sr. (chief engineer), and Randy Baron (diver assigned with the ship on its various voyages).

It was expected that mooring would be completed using Global Positioning Satellite data. This was accomplished by Captain Emmel, who drew admiring glances when he set the four-point mooring over the wreck without disturbing anything on the sea bottom. Unlike the previous mother ships, which had returned to the Crescent City harbor each night, the large *American Salvor* remained in place at sea for the duration.

The cost to DSR for the *American Salvor* was over $8,000 per day plus $55,000 in mobilization and demobilization charges. The latter included the installation and removal of special racks, storage facilities, and equipment for managing a mini sub, the diving bell, and related devices. A basic crew was included in the arrangement. Other crew members were supplied separately by DSR.

1. Length given as 210 feet in from one account, "Summary of August 1997 Recovery Operations." The beam of the ship is 56 feet. The 1997 "Summary" is the source of many technical and certain information given in this chapter.

On board the *American Salvor* a steel-walled room was used to store the recovered coins. Within the room was a extra diving decompression chamber, which was brought into service as a security vault. To gain access two DSR directors each worked part of a multiple combination lock. Plastic bags containing the newly brought up coins were inventoried and numbered. As before, Barry Sutton was in charge of overall security and had been authorized by the federal judge to supervise the transport of treasure to Brink's armored car service.

On-board amenities included a modern kitchen and dining area in addition to crew quarters. The galley was an attraction for everyone, for on board any ship the quality of food is often a determining factor in the contentment and satisfaction of the crew. In a report of the 1997 operations, DSR paid thanks to "the captain(s) and crew of the recovery vessel *American Salvor* for their exceptional work, with special recognition to Chief Steward Teri Ward and chef Ben Garcia, whose galley magic was a major factor in maintaining the high morale of all personnel involved."

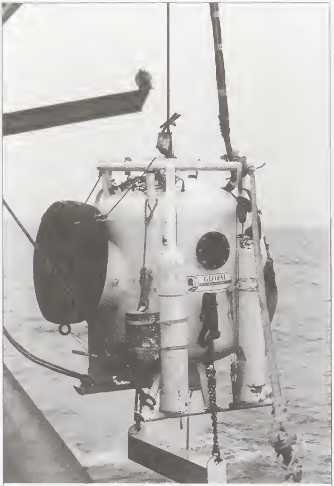
The interior walls of the main deck halls were lined with photographs of the ship's past worldwide recovery operations, including pulling huge freighters and tankers from stranded positions.

Divers and Equipment

The saturation diving technique involved greater expense, more equipment, and a larger diving crew than employed in earlier years. By this method, divers lived aboard the *M/V American Salvor* in sealed hyperbaric chambers which reproduced the pressure encountered near the bottom of the sea. When work was to be done on the wreck, they used a diving bell or chamber lowered by cable to the sea bottom, from which compartment they could come and go. By breathing mixed gases and not having to undergo decompression procedures for each dive, the men were able to work for long periods of time—in contrast to the approximately 15 minutes for the diving team of the year before. Living in a hyperbaric chamber required good nerves and the ability to exist in a tiny, restricted space for a long period of time—much like being on a space shuttle in orbit.

Personnel and equipment were supplied by Global Diving & Salvage of Seattle, with partners Tim Beaver and John Graham of the firm. Graham remained aboard for the entire operation and oversaw the procedures. A DSR report gave details of the equipment and techniques employed:[1]

> The diving team consisted of two shift supervisors, two saturation technicians, two saturation divers, two diving tenders, two surface gas divers, and two life support technicians. Those involved included John Graham (owner, project manager), Tim Beaver (owner, surface diver, tender), Joe Amaral (diver, tender), Don Moore (supervisor), Dave Partlow (supervisor), Bruce Humberstone (SAT diver), Herb Williams (SAT diver), Dan Pierson (diver, tender), Dave DeVilbis (tender), Scott Dimmick (surface diver, tender), Ron Larsen (tender), and Doug Bailes (tender). All of these individuals performed numerous functions in addition to those described in their job titles.
>
> Divers were going to work in shifts for a total diving time of 12 hours per day. It was anticipated that the two-man SAT diving crew would live in a pressurized habitat on the ship continuously throughout the recovery operation, the atmosphere being pressurized to match the ambient pressure of the ocean floor—eliminating the need for daily compression and decompression. Each diver would have an "umbilical cord" to connect to the surface to provide mixed gases[2] for breathing as well as constant audio communication. The helmet of each diver would have built-in lights and a closed circuit video camera.
>
> Daily routine consisted of waking the SAT team up and serving them breakfast at about 7:30 a.m., then locking the diving bell to the recompression chamber and pressurizing it. By 8:30 the SAT team was dressed out and en route to the bottom. The bell was lowered to a depth of 200 feet. The divers then opened its lower hatch, and the duty diver exited to begin his shift. Directed by the deck supervisor and/or



The diving bell unit with cables and umbilical cord attached, with divers aboard, as it is lowered into the sea at the *Brother Jonathan* wreck site off the coast of Crescent City. (DSR photograph)

[1] Additional information supplied by Tim Beaver, letter, January 24, 1999.

[2] A percentage of the nitrogen was replaced with another inert gas, usually helium, to prevent or eliminate the narcotic effect of nitrogen at diving depth, thus permitting the divers to function normally.

The diving bell attached to the on-board recompression chamber on the *American Salvor.* These units furnished the habitat for experienced divers to live and work for days at a time. (DSR photograph)

archaeologist topside, the divers performed various aspects of investigation, mapping, and recovery. Topside personnel were able to follow the divers' progress via small television cameras on the divers' hard hats, which transmitted to two monitoring stations.

Each SAT diver worked a 5½ hour shift, while his partner in the bell acted as tender. The bell was positioned as near as possible to the area in which DSR had recovered its coins in 1996. Due to the limited range of the divers' hoses, they were restricted to working only in an area approximately 15 x 28 feet. On completion of his shift the duty diver would return to the bell and switch out with his partner for the remaining 5½ hours. At the end of 11 hours, with both divers aboard and the lower hatch sealed, the bell was retrieved, brought aboard *American Salvor,* and locked to the recompression chamber. Once pressure had been equalized between the bell and chamber, the divers could then remove their diving suits, wash up and have their evening meal "blown down" to them through the pressurized transfer lock.

On occasion it was necessary to put a diver down directly from the recovery vessel, either to assist the SAT team on a temporary evolution or to perform a task which was outside the SAT team's limited range of travel. On these occasions, the diver suited up aboard *American Salvor* and was then lowered on a small stage to a point outside the wreck. The diver had a maximum bottom time of 40 minutes before beginning his ascent. For purposes of calculating decompression times, a diver's bottom time is measured as the time between leaving the surface in descent and leaving the bottom in ascent. Therefore, the diver had 40 minutes from the time he left the surface until he had to leave the bottom.

The initial intervals of each diver's decompression were performed on the stage, while the final phases were conducted in the onboard recompression chamber located on the main deck. All surface gas dives were hard hat dives, with the diver tethered to the recovery vessel and being supplied with a breathing mixture from the surface. Combined decompression times totaled about 2½ hours for the 40 minute surface gas dive.

The aft part of *American Salvor's* weather deck was fitted out with a saturation diving system consisting of a pressurized saturation diving bell, a 52 inch double lock recompression chamber,[5] the diving control console shack, several air compressors, hydraulic winches, supplies of helium, oxygen, and nitrogen for the gas mixtures, gas mixing apparatus, heaters and pumps for the hot water diving suits, and additional gear necessary for support of deep water diving operations.

On the main deck immediately below the weather deck *American Salvor* housed a second decompression chamber for the surface gas divers, the onboard primary processing station for recovered cultural materials, the artifact storage room, and the security area for storage of recovered coins. A third decompression chamber on emergency standby was also located aboard.

The diving team, special decompression chambers, and other sophisticated equipment from Global Diving & Salvage carried a cost to DSR of over $10,000 per day.

[5] This chamber, 52 inches in diameter by 15 feet in length, served as living quarters for the two SAT divers for the three week duration of diving operations.

The bright yellow *Snooper* one-man submarine in its cradle on the deck of the *American Salvor* as shown in August 1997, the author's son Andrew standing nearby.

Support Vessels

Support and crew vessels for the 1997 operation were two: the 26-foot aluminum-hull *Negotiator,* owned by the Undersea Company of Port Townsend, Washington, and skippered by John C. Nesset; and the 25-foot fiberglass-hull *Sea Chicken,* owned locally by Pat Wilson of Crescent City. Wilson helped guide the *American Salvor* to the correct position over the wreck site, and over a period of time kept a security surveillance on the restricted area.

A budget was set at $442,000 to take care of the complete operation including mother and shuttle vessels, the diving team, ship crew, and supplies. However, in the final accounting the total rose to include time to demobilize the mother ship, a higher price than expected for the gas used by the divers, and other elements. The final tally was nearly $600,000.

Meanwhile, Gene Sctott was working on numismatic thoughts and considerations, and in the San Francisco area dealer Robert Johnson was continuing with the conservation procedure.

Snooper

The familiar bright yellow *Snooper* mini-sub, owned by Don and Curt Sverts and their Undersea Graphics Company was again engaged for its undersea exploration capabilities. The submersible was kept in a special cradle on the starboard side of the *American Salvor,* just below the helicopter landing platform (DSR did not use a helicopter, however), from which point it could be lowered by a crane into the water.

Snooper's activities during the 1997 recovery were described by DSR:

> Since the generally poor visibility on the wreck site consistently interfered with DSR's plans for mapping the wreck using systematic videography, the information and measurements brought back by *Snooper* proved invaluable in developing an accurate site plan.
>
> Once *Snooper* was prepared for a dive, standard operational procedure called for her to be lifted by crane using a specially designed lifting rig, and suspended just above the water alongside *American Salvor's* starboard sponson deck. The pilot would board at this time and seal himself inside the sub. Once *Snooper* had been lowered into the water, the lifting rig was detached and the submersible was on her own, free of any attachment to the recovery vessel. Normally, she followed the primary down line to the bottom.
>
> *Snooper's* progress was monitored from a station set up under the aft end of the helicopter landing platform. Voice contact was maintained with the pilot via a wireless communication system. A second video monitor, in addition to the one in the diving control console shack, was located here for the benefit of *Snooper's* topside control technician and any crew members or visitors who cared to observe the divers' progress.
>
> *Snooper* made a total of 11 dives during the operation, for a total bottom time of 26½ hours. She collected information on the layout of the wreck, assisted the SAT team and surface gas divers by illuminating their work areas, and mapped and videotaped as much of the wreck as was possible, examining parts of the site beyond the limits of the SAT team and surface gas divers.
>
> As part of the attempt to map the site, virtually all of it was investigated by *Snooper* at one time or another. *Snooper's* activities were limited to observation and visual data gathering and were entirely non-intrusive.

The August Recovery

In the August 1997 effort, DSR confined its operations from the diving bell to a small portion of the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* a rectangle measuring about 15 by 28 feet on the port side of the vessel near its center, the

A fully suited professional diver on board the *American Salvor* preparatory to a visit to the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* in the sea below. (DSR photograph)

general area where many hundreds of double eagles had been recovered in 1996. The zone was marked off by a grid divided into quadrants defined by polypropylene lines. In this way any interesting object could be recorded as to its location within just a few feet. Other divers, connected to the mother ship by umbilical cords, went beyond this zone, but little was done in the way of extensive exploration.

The recovery interval extended from August 20 to 31, with two interruptions due to rough weather. At the end of the period, a two and one-half day decompression period was needed for the saturation divers. Unlike the 1996 procedure, in 1997 divers were continuously connected by tether to the mother ship or to the diving bell by a safety line and gas supply line.

The water temperature at the wreck site was in the mid-40s. Visibility was limited during the entire stay and rarely was more than five or six feet. As a result, videographic accomplishments in 1997 were less than had been anticipated. Notwithstanding this, by the end of the operation, the *Brother Jonathan* was one of the most extensively documented and surveyed wrecks of its era, and remained one of the few accessible, located sunken ships that had not been measurably disturbed by its salvors.

Although the crew members and captains were mostly new to the DSR officials, cooperation was the order of the day, and all worked together harmoniously.

In the summer of 1997 there was relatively little local publicity concerning the project. The *Brother Jonathan* recovery had received extensive newspaper coverage for the two previous years, and now it was no longer a front-page item, except for an occasional notice. Curiosity seekers were few and far between, and security problems were minimal.

A report on the 1997 activities gave the logical and at the same time elegant comment regarding the *lasting benefit to others* of DSR's recovery of gold coins, "Deep Sea Research is of the opinion that removal of any intrinsically valuable material from the wreck will remove most of the incentive for third party interlopers to attack and damage the site."[1]

A Reminiscence by Captain John C. Nesset

Captain Nesset and his boat, the *Negotiator,* were hired by Harvey Harrington to operate a shuttle service between the Crescent City harbor and the *American Salvor.* The captain recalled many experiences including these:

> The *Negotiator,* was towed on a flatbed trailer from my home in Port Townsend, down Interstate 5, through the Redwood Forest and into the harbor at Crescent City, California, a week ahead of everyone else. My family and I rented a house there and became familiar with the area watching for the salvage ship to arrive. It was the end of July, but cool enough to wonder why I had brought so many shorts. The coast here was cooled down by the misty ocean where just 10 miles inland it was 20° warmer and sunnier. Dense fog cut visibility to only 100 feet on the first day that I was to take passengers out to the ship. I was happy to have Pat Wilson, the local captain, guide me through the "Dragon's Teeth," as some dangerous rocks were called. The *Negotiator* assisted the *American Salvor* in its special mooring maneuver dropping four anchors while being careful not to drag a cable over the wreck site. The *Negotiator* hovered at precise GPS fixes to give the captain of the *American Salvor* a blip on his radar screen and a visual reference as he paid out slack on the anchor cable from the slowly moving ship. I would wait until the last second before moving off to get out of the way of the towering black bow of the ship as it lumbered by.
>
> Once the ship was moored the Global Diving team from Seattle operated the diving bell over the salvor's starboard side of the vessel. I would stay well clear of the divers' air lines and go to the seaward side of the ship where the swells hit the hardest. If the swells were over seven feet it was too dangerous to have passengers exchanged. Timing the swells as seven seemed to mark each large surge. If the swells were over 10 feet, I could not tie up at all. Supplies and parts had to be rushed out to the ship. If it was too rough, I would throw a line attached to the items while passing alongside and let them pull it over. The daily newspapers were bundled up in a plastic

The crew aboard the *American Salvor* as air tanks and a recovery box are brought up from the depths. (Joseph Amaral photograph for DSR)

[1] "1997 Field Investigations" draft report by DSR.

Above: Dishes and other ceramic items from the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* shown during the conservation process at the Del Norte County Museum. (Del Norte County Historical Society)

At right: Artifacts from the wreck of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* being soaked in a special solution as part of the conservation process at the Del Norte County Museum. (Del Norte County Historical Society)

ing and thrown. I gained great knowledge about a treasure salvage project including that the first cargo off is garbage.

The *Negotiator* became the conduit between the operation at sea and the investors on the beach who each had an opportunity to be on board the salvage ship. Their ride out to the ship was usually spent with some sort of anticipation as the ship could be seen near the horizon after clearing the jetty, which became larger on our approach. Their faces had some anxiety as they watched the first in the group get onto the ship from the *Negotiator*. Each person had to time the jump as the boat went up, so as to be able to get off before it went all the way back down—all the while holding onto a line to swing like Tarzan if it became necessary.

On their return to the side of the *American Salvor*, getting ready to make the jump to the shuttle, you could almost read their thoughts like, "Oh no, we have to get down on the boat again." Then holding onto the line, each coaching each other, they boarded the boat. Once they caught their breath and removed the bulky life jackets they were always thrilled with what they had seen, excitedly talking all the way back to the harbor.

My attention was focused on keeping the *Negotiator* safe from the swell action while tied alongside the ship, but at times the surface was very calm allowing me to go aboard and talk to lots of interesting people. I discovered the best food in all of Crescent City was offshore in the galley of the *American Salvor*. The on-board archaeologist taught many of us about the artifacts that would appear out of the decomposing cargo boxes after they where brought up from the shipwreck. The first time I was being allowed to separate a stack of encrusted gold coins glistening in the daylight for the first time since 1865.

Buckets of cataloged artifacts came back on return trips which were taken to the Historical Society. The trip I remember most, of course, was when the gold was taken off the ship onto my boat, piloted to the harbor and into the awaiting Brink's truck amid the police cars. The small community knew that we would bring gold back but did not know when, at least not until the Brink's truck parked at the dock.

Artifacts for the Local Museum

During the 1997 undersea explorations, approximately 220 artifacts, other than coins, were brought to the surface. In accordance with the "want list" supplied by the Del Norte County Historical Society, most items recovered were made of ceramic, glass, or copper and were candidates for eventual conservation and display in the Del Norte County Museum. In keeping with DSR's policy of not rearranging or otherwise materially disturbing the wreck, only items that were readily visible or lightly covered with residue were recovered. Undoubtedly, within the recesses of the hold there are other items to be found. Further, large quantities of duplicate items such as plain china dishes were not recovered, as no request was made for them. One of the "items"[1] is actually a veritable *collection* of things, the partial remains of a wooden crate containing what appears to be a shipment of locks, keys, doorknobs, file blades, rasps, wood gouges, and assorted wooden handles. During laboratory processing and conservation, each one of these items will be individually catalogued. Assisting with evaluations during the recovery were DSR's on-board marine archaeologist, who cleaned, contained, identified, and catalogued each item as it was brought aboard the mother ship.

[1] Artifact Field Number 97-0042.

Wire-mesh container being raised from the sea. Within are artifacts from the *Brother Jonathan.* (DSR photograph)

The "1997 Field Report" by DSR noted:

By far the most numerous items recovered were ceramic plates, dishes, etc. Large numbers of these can be seen lying exposed on the bottom in the many hours of videotapes, the crates and barrels which once held them having completely deteriorated.... The items consisted of a wide assortment of dinner plates, platters, saucers, cups, mugs, bowls, sugar bowls, etc. A fair portion of the ceramic cargo appears to have been made up of English stoneware and ironstone china. Several of the recovered pieces displayed various types of hallmarks. These consisted of a variety of inked stamps, impressions, and embossed shapes. They included several forms of the British "Lion and Unicorn" symbol, together with maker's names and places of manufacture.

A variety of glass items were recovered. These included champagne and spirit bottles, medicine and condiment bottles, pitchers and cruets, drinking glasses, and other items.

At least three bottles of light green glass embossed with the legend "Lea & Perrins; Worcestershire Sauce" were recovered. Whether these were part of the ship's cargo or part of her galley stores has not yet been determined. A pair of lamp chimneys—one cracked—were recovered. Almost identical to similar items available today, these differ in the notable thickness of their glass and their extremely durable construction.

A variety of small vials and bottles, including one labeled "Agua de Florida, Murray y Lanham, 69 Water Street, New York" and another labeled "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup" were recovered. The latter once contained laudanum, a combination of opium and alcohol widely used in the 19th century as a tranquilizer and pain killer.

A number of drinking glasses, mugs and other items were recovered. These ranged from what appear to be small dessert glasses, to beer mugs, to some small cut-glass pitchers, to what have been described as either inkwells or salt cellars.

Several pieces constructed of brass, bronze, and copper were recovered. The most interesting of these were a large inline valve, two small sections of hull sheathing, a bronze pump labeled "Farnam's Patent," a sword handguard, a brass padlock, and a brass porthole (with cracked glass) identical to one recovered during the 1996 field season.

Several wooden items were recovered. They consist primarily of the tool handles found in association with Artifact Field Number 97-0042 (per the registry numbers kept by DSR), the partially deteriorated crate. These are made of a heavy, tightly grained wood—possibly oak or rosewood—and appear to be in excellent condition. We can be certain that as 97-0042 is gradually reduced it will yield additional similar wooden items. Also recovered was the lid of a cigar box imprinted with the legend "General Scott, Habana."

Aside from the objects contained in Artifact Field Number 97-0042, only one other ferrous artifact—a badly oxidized wrought iron hinge—was recovered.

A single button, probably from a piece of clothing, is about the size of a dime; its face is decorated with a design of concentric circles, while the back bears the legend "N.R. Co. Goodyear's PT. 1851." Such buttons were common and popular in the 1850s and 1860s and exist in many different varieties. One item brought to the surface—a large through-the-hull fitting—was deemed to be uninteresting for exhibit purposes and was carefully returned to its original position on the wreck site.

To the present writer it seems almost incredible that a commercial enterprise such as DSR would spend so much time and cooperate so effectively to preserve so many items having little commercial value. In an absolute sense they have little historical value either, as finer examples of most of the artifacts are readily available in antique and second-hand shops. However, in context with a specific exhibit about life aboard the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* they have immense sentimental interest.

In addition to coins and artifacts recovered, the 1997 search resulted in adding details to the maps and grid surveys of the wreck site. Coordinates were assigned to each artifact recovered, and each item was photographed *in situ* before being brought to the surface. A great amount of information was gathered regarding the condition, contents, position, and other aspects of the wreck.

A well-known marine historian, Gary Gentile, author in 1990 of *Shipwrecks of Delaware and Maryland*, was appointed by the Federal Court to visit the site and submit his observations. He subsequently reported that DSR was performing the work in a professional and appropriate manner.

Dan Pierson holds a brass porthole retrieved from the wreck of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan.* (DSR photograph)

Scenes from the 1997 salvage efforts by Deep Sea Research.

Rare Coins

While great efforts were made in 1997, the recovery of rare coins did not match that of the previous year. At final count 332 coins, again mostly $20 gold double eagles, were brought to the surface. This brought the total of 1996 and 1997 recoveries to 1,207, making the two-year project one of the most successful treasure recoveries of all time.

Nearly all of the coins are in high grades. Many are choice to gem Mint State—brilliant, lustrous, and frosty—virtually as nice as the day they were struck at the San Francisco Mint. The arrangement of some of the $20 pieces in cylindrical piles or stacks seemed to indicate that at least several hundred of these had been packed very carefully in 1865—as opposed to loose coins or "passenger gold."

During the August 1997 recovery, numismatist Gene Seton and his wife Marilyn stayed near the Crescent City harbor in their motor home. On occasion, Gene would take the *Negotiator* shuttle to the *American Salvor* and check on any discoveries that had been made.

In September, the newly recovered coins were turned over to Brink's and shipped to the San Francisco area. After the coins were carefully washed and conserved by Robert Johnson of San Francisco—who continued as the court-appointed expert—they were evaluated by DSR's consulting numismatist Gene Seton.

The Year 1998

The year 1998 was spent not in another recovery attempt, but pursuing the legal battle with the State of California. In its latest move, the State appealed to the United States Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's decisions on the basis of 11th Amendment immunity. In a decision written by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor the Court *unanimously* denied the State's appeal.[1]

On Monday, April 27, 1998, one of the California's most respected newspapers, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, carried the following as an editorial:

The *Brother Jonathan* Shipwreck

California treasure hunters, who claim salvage rights to the sunken Gold Rush-era steamer, *Brother Jonathan*, won a major legal victory last week when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state's assertion of ownership.

The legal issues are complex, but in briefest terms the high court dismissed California's claim to the shipwreck and said ownership of such historic derelicts must be determined by a federal maritime court.

While the case is not settled, the court's unanimous ruling was a boost to Deep Sea Research, a group of hardy treasure hunters who discovered the 220-foot, sidewheel steamer *Brother Jonathan*, that sank off the North Coast in 1865 with 221 souls. It was the worst maritime disaster in California history, but left a sunken legacy of historic objects along with an Army payroll in gold that is believed to be worth millions.

Deep Sea Research took the risks to find the wreck in 1993 and have been fighting state bureaucrats for ownership ever since.

We are rooting for the treasure seekers, whose bold adventures spark the imagination and inspire dreams of diving on the estimated 5,000 wrecks—including gold-laden pirate ships—that still lie undiscovered in U.S. coastal waters.

Would the State *ever* give up?

At long last there was light at the end of the dark tunnel of litigation. A compromise settlement was reached with the State of California whereby 1/6th of the coins would be given to the state in exchange for cessation of legal actions and court claims. The State agreed to hold its coins for at least 15 years before deaccessioning any of them. This was accomplished in January 1999. Under the agreement, DSR retained 1,007 coins and 200 went to the State.

By early 1999, plans were being made to distribute DSR's gold coins to the numismatic market, thus making the *S.S. Brother Jonathan's* treasure widely available to the collecting community, historians, and any others interested in acquiring a tangible golden reminder of one of the most historical steamships of the Gold Rush era.

Discussions had been held with seven firms and auction houses interested in rare coins, and Auctions by Bowers and Merena, Inc., of Wolfeboro, NH, was selected to handle the treasure.

The Bowers and Merena firm, which regularly conducts auctions in New York City, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and other cities, has credentials of long standing. By 1998, when the choice was made, the firm could point to handling three of the top four most valuable collections of United States coins ever to cross the auction block, among which was the nearly $45,000,000 Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection, at once the very most valuable cabinet ever to cross the auction block and also the only complete set of United States coins, from copper half cents to gold $20 pieces, ever formed. Previously the "most valuable collection" honor had been held by another Bowers and Merena presentation, the $25,000,000 Garrett Collection auctioned on behalf of The Johns Hopkins University.

Experts from the firm—including Mark Borckardt, senior numismatist; Douglas Plasencia, staff photographer; and Raymond Merena, company president—made trips to California to assist in the study of and sale planning for the coins. Chris Karstedt worked with Fletcher C. Alford and the DSR principals to coordinate plans to bring the treasure coins to market. In the meantime Q. David Bowers and his research staff gathered historical information from far and wide to create the present book. The Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS), founded by David Hall in 1986 and located in Newport Beach, California, was selected to certify the coins reserved for sale. Each coin was placed in a special holder and identified as to its condition

[1] Details were published in several places including "Federal Court Will Decide Fate of Treasure," by Dennis Pfaff, *San Francisco Daily Journal*, San Francisco, CA, April 23, 1998.

or grade, its registry number (as planned to be used in the auction presentation), and a special label attesting to its provenance from the treasure of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Epilogue

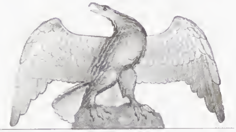
Meanwhile, the officers of Deep Sea Research, Inc., continue to plan for the future.

Are there other gold coins hidden in the undersea wreckage of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan?* The coins recovered through 1997 had a face value of slightly less than $24,000—a small fraction of the treasure believed to have been shipped. There is every hope that more may be awaiting discovery. Then there is the matter of the $200,000 in Legal Tender notes stored in a special safe. "Passenger gold" may also be scattered here and there.

However, recovery procedures following the careful methods of DSR are very expensive. Should more "casual" methods be employed? (the writer's idea; heaven forbid that DSR should suggest such a thing!). It is to be realized that left unattended, nearly all items on the sea floor will in time rot and rust to nothingness. Will the State of California, now a "partner" in the project, commit funds?

Will the *Brother Jonathan* give up more secrets? What the future holds, only time will tell.

Appendix I



Chronology of the Activities of Deep Sea Research, Inc.

Corporate and Treasure-Seeking Events

1991: Deep Sea Research founded. Donald G. Knight and Harvey Harrington, both formerly of Sea-Epics Research, and an experienced diver, James Wadsley, founded DSR to recover coins from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, specifically those that might be in an iron safe which Don Knight believed via magnetometer readings that he had located near Brother Jonathan Rock offshore from Crescent City. Others joined the firm in 1991 and 1992, including Sherman Harris and David L. Flohr. Later, Messrs. Wadsley, Harrington, Harris, and Flohr would become the four officers of the company, and Knight would leave DSR.

1991: Side Scan Survey. With the assistance of H. Arnold Carr, of American Underwater Search & Survey, Ltd., of Cataumet, MA, and the services of the 42' foot vessel, *Top Cat*, of Crescent City, CA, Deep Sea Research, Inc. (DSR) completed a series of side scan sonar surveys. The effort located many items including a 200-foot target. However, at the time emphasis continued to be on a small item near Jonathan Rock believed to be an iron safe containing treasure.

1991-1992: Several trips by DSR officers and others were made to Crescent City, but the iron safe continued to be elusive and there was no sign of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*.

1992: Preparations. Corporate maintenance, research and fund raising for the exploration and recovery project.

1993, September 25-30: The first large-scale search for the gold-filled safe was conducted in the vicinity of Jonathan Rock. The M/V *Cavalier* and the two-man submarine *Delta* circled the area for several days, but nothing resembling treasure was located.

1993, October 1: S.S. Brother Jonathan **confirmed and found.** The long-lost ship was located and confirmed in the area of the early 1991 target. Jim Wadsley and Harvey Harrington were there along with Barry Sutton and others, all of whom provided assistance. Don Siverts, aboard his mini-sub *Snooper,* was the first human to see the wreck since 1865. Visual verification that this was the *Brother Jonathan,* the same object as the 200-foot target seen on the side scan sonar survey in 1991, was accomplished with *Delta,* a two-man submarine, and *Snooper,* a one-man submarine, each equipped with a 35 mm camera and video capabilities.

1994: Knight leaves. Founding director Donald G. Knight left his DSR directorship and later formed his own firm.

1994: Insurance follow-through. An effort was made by DSR to identify insurers whose interests might be continuing, and in 1994 the Commercial Union Insurance Company and the Continental Insurance Company (formerly the Phenix Insurance Company of New York) transferred salvage rights to DSR. Phenix was one of the companies represented by Bigelow and Brother, San Francisco. Phenix had merged with Fidelity Fire Insurance in 1910 which in turn merged into the Continental Insurance Company in 1959. Falkner, Bell & Company represented the Imperial Fire and Life Insurance Company of London in 1865, which later became part of the Sun Alliance Group.

1994, June: Surveys. Further surveying was done, using the M/V *Cavalier,* a 110 foot supply vessel, and the little submarine *Delta.* The purpose of the survey was to insure security of the wreck site and develop a salvage plan for the recovery of selected items from the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* A high-speed "spy boat" seemed to be watching the proceedings. The State of California stated its objection to DSR's activities and threatened to block DSR in court. Peter Pelkofer, lead attorney for the State Lands Commission, was spokesman.

1994, September: In court. The State of California went to Federal Court to prevent the DSR recovery. Fletcher C. Alford of the San Francisco law firm of Gordon & Rees was the lead representative for DSR for this and later actions.

1995, March: Court ruling in favor of DSR. California State Lands Commission motioned in the Northern District Court to dismiss DSR's *in rem* action against the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. At this point DSR was appointed as the official salvor of items from the wreck and was authorized to proceed with recovery work. State's motion denied on March 15, 1995.

1995, May: Federal arrest warrant. To secure the claim of DSR to recover items from the wreck, a federal arrest warrant was served on the *Brother Jonathan* wreck site, thus giving it certain legal protection against other claimants and intruders. The restricted area is about four and one half miles off shore from the coastline and about nine miles by ship from the Crescent City harbor. The area is a circle with a radius of one mile, having as its centerpoint the geographic coordinates of 43° 46'29" north and 124°20'50" west. No vessels other than those belonging to or authorized by DSR and law enforcement agencies were henceforth allowed in the area.

1995, May to July: Site surveillance. DSR arranged for mobile radar to be installed and completed other arrangements for securing the integrity of the wreck site.

1995, July: Court ruling in favor of DSR. The State of California filed a motion to stay the court's order of March 15, 1995, as amended on April 5 and May 5, 1994. Motion denied.

1995, July 30: Memorial service. In Crescent City a memorial service was held to honor the memories of those who had perished 130 years earlier aboard the *Brother Jonathan*. DSR investor and officer Harvey Harrington gave a commentary to about 100 people who had gathered, and he presented several artifacts from the wreck to the Del Norte County Museum with the expectation that more would be given as recoveries progressed. Harrington spent much of the summer in Crescent City planning for an August or September undersea effort, but anticipated funds from investors did not materialize, and the recovery project was delayed for a year.

1995, September: Site study. DSR used side scan sonar, a magnetometer, and the Global Positioning System to determine the extent of the *Brother Jonathan* debris field. The possibility that artifacts and ship parts had been strewn along the sea floor all the way from the Jonathan Rock to the wreck site, a distance of over two miles, was explored, but nothing of interest was found.

1995, August 12: Better late than never. On this date the State of California voted to nominate the wreck of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* for listing on the National Historic Register, this despite that there was no plan for what to do with the wreck, no state representative had ever visited the site, and its location was completely unknown until it was found by DSR.

1995, October: Court ruling in favor of DSR. The State of California filed a motion (95-15693) to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeal for an injunction to prevent Deep Sea Research, Inc., from proceeding with recovery efforts. Motion denied (2-0).

1996, June: Effort canceled. A planned salvage effort by the M/V *Mother Goose* and the one-man *Snooper* mini-submarine was canceled when the *Mother Goose* was faced with rough seas and had to [illegible] to Bodega Bay, north of San Francisco, for 10 days.

1996, July: Court ruling in favor of DSR. The State of California appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse the Northern District Court's March 15, 1995 ruling. Appeal denied on July 17, 1996 (3-0).

1996, August: Court ruling in favor of DSR. The State of California appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for a rehearing on its decision of July 17, 1996, affirming the Northern District Court's decision. Appeal denied (3-0).

1996, August 27 to September 6: Site exploration, mapping, and recovery. The wreck site was mapped using a system of grids and other equipment. [illegible] what was left of the ship and to plan salvage efforts. Some artifacts were recovered and [illegible] given to the Del Norte Historical Society. The Society was [illegible] to make up a "want list" of other items that it would like and which had some chance of being likely to be on the wreck. Efforts were conducted with the M/V [illegible] as the mother ship, *Xanadu* as the [illegible] ship, and the [illegible] *Snooper* and the [illegible].

1996, August 30: Gold coins were seen on the wreck by Harvey Harrington. Large quantities appeared on the surface. [illegible] Subsequent dives brought hundreds of coins to the surface, mostly $20 pieces. Specimens were handled with care and transported by Brink's to a San Francisco area bank vault, where they were catalogued by Robert [illegible], a well-known numismatist.

1996, September 6: Gold coins recovered. By the last day of the 1996 search, 875 pieces, mostly $20 double eagles, were found.

1997, June: United States Supreme Court ruling in favor of DSR. The State of California made a motion (96-1400) to the United States Supreme Court for an injunction to prevent Deep Sea Research's recovery work on the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*. Motion denied unanimously (9-0).

1997, summer: Conservation laboratory established. The Del Norte County Museum, with the cooperation of the Del Norte County Historical Society and DSR (with funding by DSR), set up a conservation facility at the Flynn House in Crescent City. Herbert Bump, of International Artifact Conservation Laboratories of Belle-Chasse, Louisiana provided guidance. Ms. Becki Young was instrumental in assisting DSR researchers to locate specific primary source material in the Del Norte County Museum archives, and in setting up and maintaining the Flynn House operations.

1997, August: Gold coins recovered: In 15 days of saturation diving by an experienced team working from the *M/V American Salvor* and with assistance from the mini-sub *Snooper*, 332 coins, mostly $20 double eagles, were found. This brought the total of 1996 and 1997 recoveries to 1,207. Much additional site exploration, mapping, and recovery of historical artifacts was conducted, the artifacts going to the Del Norte County Museum. By the end of the search $3,300,000 had been expended by DSR. In recent years the officers had received no salaries or compensation.

1998, April: United States Supreme Court ruling in favor of DSR. The United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision (9-0) in favor of the salvors of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and rejected the argument of the State of California that the State's 11th Amendment immunity could be used to bar an admiralty suit. Only when the ship was in the actual possession of the state could immunity be imposed. The Court remanded the case to the District Court for a trial on the issues of abandonment and the state's claim of ownership. It reaffirmed the traditional admiralty definition of "abandonment."

1998: Agreement reached with State of California. By means of a negotiated agreement, the State of California agreed to cease its legal actions against DSR in return for a 1/6th share in the rare coins recovered.

Court Cases Involving the *Brother Jonathan*

Fletcher C. Alford, of the law firm of Gordon & Rees, worked several years with Deep Sea Research, Inc., in a series of court actions, each of which was won decisively for DSR. The following is a complete chronology of these cases together with selected commentary and related newspaper articles.

March 1995

The California State Land Commission filed a motion in the Northern District Court to dismiss Deep Sea Research's *in rem* action against the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, citing lack of subject matter jurisdiction. At this point DSR had been appointed as the official salvor of items from the wreck and was authorized to proceed with recovery work.

Motion denied on March 15, 1995. Victory for DSR.

July 1995

The State of California filed a motion to stay the court's order of March 15, 1995, as amended on April 5 and May 5, 1995.

Motion denied. Victory for DSR.

October 1995

The State of California filed a motion (95-15693) to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for an injunction to prevent Deep Sea Research, Inc., from proceeding with recovery efforts.

Motion denied (2-0). Victory for DSR.

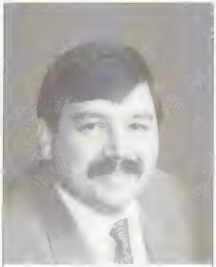
[1] Before this same Appellate Court the deputy attorney general of California had stated on three occasions that the State of California had no interest in monetary treasure from the wreck (cf. David Hohl, letter, January 8, 1999).

Kathleen Dougherty in an article, "Sunken Ship Inspires Treasure Tales of Gold—and Court Battle," in the *Sacramento Bee*, February 11, 1996, noted that state attorney Peter Pelkofer said that the *Brother Jonathan*:

"Should be salvaged by archeologists from a university or research institute whose goal would be the conservation of the ship's historical treasures. I don't expect Deep Sea Research would give anything to a museum. If their purpose is to satisfy stockholders, the only way to do that is to sell artifacts to people who are willing to buy them."

In response, Jim Wadsley of Deep Sea Research, stated that a qualified archaeologist had indeed been employed, and that artifacts were intended to be given to museums and anyone else interested. Wadsley further noted that at least a "representative sample" of historical items would go to museums and that "if you find 200 dinner plates, do you need them all on display?"

The china plates, for example, were strictly utilitarian and without any markings either as to the *Brother Jonathan* or to their maker. While a virtually unlimited supply of plates was available from DSR for the asking, it is highly unlikely that the Del Norte County Museum or any other museum would ever use more than a few for a meaningful display.



Fletcher C. Alford of the law firm of Gordon & Rees.

July 1996

The State of California appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse the Northern District Court's March 15, 1995 ruling.

Appeal denied on July 17, 1996 (3-0). Victory for DSR

August 1996

The State of California appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for a rehearing on its decision of July 17, 1996, affirming the Northern District Court's decision.

Appeal denied (3-0). Victory for DSR

By this time it seemed dramatically evident to some observers that the State of California was wasting taxpayer funds, had little in the way of a meaningful case, and was primarily engaging in annoying DSR.

June 1997

The State of California made a motion to the United States Supreme Court for an injunction to prevent Deep Sea Research's recovery work on the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*.

Motion denied (9-0). Victory for DSR

One might think that at this point that as the highest court of the land had *unanimously* ruled in favor of Deep Sea Research, Inc., *finally*, the State of California would have directed its energies, money, and other resources elsewhere. But, it didn't. Litigation continued!

April 1998

The State of California appealed to the United States Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's decisions on the basis of 11th Amendment immunity. The decision was written by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.[1]

Appeal denied (9-0). Victory for DSR

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In the Words of Fletcher C. Alford

Fletcher C. Alford, of Gordon & Rees, shares his recollections of the litigation involving the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* and his pivotal part in it:

The Early Days of the Case

My involvement in the *Brother Jonathan* case came about entirely by serendipity. One of the attorneys in our office, Bradford Lomas, had done some maritime work, and he was referred to Deep Sea Research ("DSR") through a friend of a friend. He met with DSR's founder, Don Knight, they hit it off, and he brought the case to our firm. However, Brad left our office shortly thereafter to work for an insurance company, and he could not continue to represent DSR in his new capacity. After his departure, I "inherited" the case.

As he left, Brad ruefully remarked, "You lucky dog! That case is going to go all the way to the Supreme Court." Ever the skeptic, I thought nothing of Brad's prediction. After all, only one in a million cases goes to the Supreme Court. Why would this one ever make it?

Initially, I geared my efforts toward attempting to reach an early settlement with the State of California. The first settlement meeting occurred early on—before the litigation had heated up. Mark Hemstreet (an investor in DSR) and I flew to Sacramento on his private jet plane, and met with Peter Pelkofer, his superior, Jack Rump, and California State Senator Presley. We met in Sen. Presley's office. During the meeting, the State was adamant on two points:

1) DSR had no chance at all of prevailing in the litigation, so why should the State compromise?

2) There is nothing of value on the vessel anyway, so why should DSR bother with the matter?

For these two reasons the State expressed no willingness whatsoever to compromise. Have you ever [illegible] both counts?

The State had no doubt that it would prevail in the litigation and was not interested in compromising. This was for good reason. Almost all of the courts that had decided the question [illegible] *in favor of the states and against the salvors.* [illegible] feeling very confident going into the litigation.

Transition

However, [illegible]

However, the judge [illegible] a week before the State [illegible] be heard.

[illegible]

[1] [illegible] San Francisco, CA, April 23, 1998.

by federal authorities as part of an investigation into organized crime.) Of course, all the other local judges declined to hear the case against their friend and fellow judge, citing a conflict of interest. So the Federal Judicial Center brought in a highly respected judge from Philadelphia—Judge Bechtle—to hear the case. We were soon to learn the importance of that apparently unrelated development.

The criminal case against the other judge did not occupy Judge Bechtle full time, so he picked up several other cases while he was out here in California—including some of the cases formerly handled by the resigning judge to whom our shipwreck case had been assigned. Federal judges have law clerks. They are just-graduated law students, and serve for a one-year term. They often have enormous power and influence—since, because of the judges' heavy case loads, the judges must delegate significant responsibility to their law clerks.

Well, it so happens that Judge Bechtle's law clerk at the time was an avid wreck diver. And as he thumbed through the stack of cases formerly assigned to the retiring judge, looking for the "plums," our case leaped out at him. He saw the State of California's motion to dismiss, and brought it before Judge Bechtle. The case was then reassigned to Judge Bechtle.

In the Court of Judge Bechtle

Judge Bechtle, who normally sits in Philadelphia, was completely unknown to me. However, I knew it was a very good sign when we showed up at that first hearing before Judge Bechtle on the State's motion to dismiss, and the Judge's law clerk asked the State's attorney, "How many witnesses do you have?" To which the State's attorney replied, in substance, "Oh, we don't have any witnesses. Our position is that this case should be dismissed because the State is immune from such litigation under the Eleventh Amendment."

The Judge took the [illegible] that the State had no witnesses, and ordered the State to come back in a week with all of their witnesses in tow.

Ordinarily, attorneys have a chance to find out what the other side's witnesses will say and to interview them under oath (in depositions) before the hearing. However, due to the [illegible] of the situation, we did not have that opportunity. When we arrived in the courtroom one week later, we found out who the State's witnesses would be at the time of their testimony. Thus, although we did our best to be prepared, we had to be [illegible] by the end of our game.

The State called several State-employed people whom they designated as experts—including a historian and an archaeologist. Not having had a chance to depose them in advance and learn in advance what they were going to say, I prepared my cross-examinations at the counsel table in the courtroom as they testified. They testified generally that the *Brother Jonathan* met the criteria spelled out in the Abandoned Shipwreck Act—that it was abandoned, embedded in the sea floor and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

On cross-examination, I did the only thing I could do, which was to point out that the witnesses had only been contacted by the State's attorneys in the week since the last hearing, and thus had not really had time to do a thorough preparation or analysis of the issues. Thus, their testimony lacked foundation and was not based upon an adequate knowledge of the wreck. I left the hearing feeling pretty good. That was in September of 1994.

Judge Bechtle's Ruling

We were left in suspense for a long time, as the Court did not issue its ruling until March of 1995. The ruling—which is published in the public law books—was a complete vindication of DSR's position. The judge ruled not only that the *Brother Jonathan* does not meet the criteria spelled out in the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, but also that a central component of the state of California's shipwreck legislation was invalid.

This account demonstrates how much of the law is pure happenstance, and how different things might have turned out had the former judge not resigned, and had they not brought Judge Bechtle out to San Francisco to try the judge accused of criminal misconduct. However, our elation over the victory before Judge Bechtle was short-lived. There are three levels of courts in the federal court system:

At the bottom is the District Court, which is the federal trial court. This is the Court Judge Bechtle sits in.

Next is the level of the Circuit Courts. The country is divided up into 11 circuits, each presided over by a Circuit Court of Appeal—in our case, the Ninth Circuit Court. These are the intermediate federal courts of appeal.

Next, and at the very top of the pyramid, is the United States Supreme Court. It is the highest court in the land. It is also a court of "discretionary jurisdiction."

In summary, if you lose your case in the District Court, you have a right to appeal to the Circuit Court. If you lose in the Circuit Court, you have no right to appeal to the Supreme Court, but you can petition the Supreme Court to hear your case. The Supreme Court does not have to hear your case though if it doesn't want to. In fact, the Supreme Court summarily declines to hear almost all of the cases that are presented to it. Because of the Court's workload, and because of its prestigious nature, it only agrees to hear a tiny percentage of all of the cases—only the most interesting, controversial, or important ones.

To the Supreme Court?

After losing in the District Court, the State appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal, where it also lost. When we won on behalf of DSR in the Ninth Circuit, I assumed that pretty much settled the matter. Many pundits assured me that there was essentially no chance the Supreme Court would agree to hear the case—the issues of law were much too obscure to command the Court's attention, and, after all, the Court had not agreed to hear a shipwreck case in more than 15 years, and had turned down many such cases.

I had mixed feelings about the matter. Going to the Supreme Court is every lawyer's dream, and I can't say that I wasn't excited by the prospect. However, I also knew that my clients would be devastated if the Supreme Court agreed to hear our case—because it would mean years of further delay, more attorneys' fees, and the risk that we might lose. After all, most of the time when the Supreme Court agrees to hear a case, it is because they think the lower court's ruling was manifestly wrong. Why would they take a case if they felt the lower ruling was correct? The percentages show that, in most of the cases the Supreme Court accepts for review, they reverse the lower court's ruling—and in our case, the lower court's ruling was in *our* favor. In short, in all but exceptional cases the client has nothing to gain and everything to lose.

I had pretty well convinced myself that, although a trip to the Supreme Court would be a fascinating experience, it was

not going to happen—the odds that the Supreme Court would agree to hear the State's petition were simply too long.

To the Supreme Court!

I'll never forget the feeling I felt that day when I got a call from a colleague. I had taken a day off, and was at home working in the yard. The phone rang, and it was for me. My colleague was on the other line. He asked, "Are you sitting down? You'll never believe it! The Supreme Court has taken the case!" I almost fainted. I felt an incredible mix of emotions—excitement, dread, elation. We started preparing almost immediately.

Over the next six months, my life was devoted almost exclusively to preparing for the Supreme Court briefing and oral argument. We worked around the clock on our brief, editing and re-editing every sentence and every footnote. When we finally filed our brief, we began preparing for oral argument.

For two reasons, we believed we had a real uphill battle in the Supreme Court.

First, is the fact that the Supreme Court granted review—so presumably, it must have felt, at least initially, that the lower court's ruling in our favor was wrong.

The second hurdle was a decision handed down by the Supreme Court just the previous term, which was a big problem for us. The basic legal issue in our case was whether our case was barred by the Eleventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Eleventh Amendment provides that States are generally immune from suit in federal courts. In the term before our case was heard, the Supreme Court released a decision praising the Eleventh Amendment and giving it a very broad interpretation. That case was a dispute between the State of Idaho and the Coeur d'Alene Indian tribe involving ownership of certain lands surrounding Lake Coeur d'Alene. The tribe claimed ownership of the land pursuant to an old treaty with the federal government; the State of Idaho claimed that it owned the lands upon entry into the Union. The lower federal court had ruled in favor of the tribe. The State then appealed, arguing that the tribe's suit was barred by the Eleventh Amendment. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the State of Idaho. The high court held that the Eleventh Amendment is a very important principle of federalism and state's rights, and that the Eleventh Amendment protects states against having to litigate their rights to property in federal court. This was really the same argument made by California in our case.

I have always tried to be realistic. Thus, I prepared my clients for the worst.

Getting Ready

Oral argument in our case was scheduled for December 1, 1997. In order to immerse myself in preparation for the oral argument, I moved to Washington D.C. for the last two weeks of November and lived there in a hotel across the street from the Supreme Court building. I was even there for Thanksgiving—a Thanksgiving I'll never forget!

I watched oral arguments in other cases. I toured the Supreme Court building. I met, day in and day out, with other lawyers who had argued many cases in the High Court. I wanted no surprises. We held grueling practice oral arguments, in which I would stand up and subject myself to extremely hostile questioning from the mock "justices." Everyone with whom I met warned that the Coeur d'Alene case was a big problem for me and that I would receive extremely hostile questioning from the justices.

We agonized for days over how we would try to distinguish the Coeur d'Alene case from our case. In the end, the only answer we could come up with—and I didn't think it was a very good one—is that "Admiralty—law regarding the sea—is different." (Unlike our case, Coeur d'Alene was not an admiralty case.)

The night before the oral argument, I couldn't sleep at all. I laid in bed, tossing and turning. I couldn't make my mind stop churning at full speed. I kept thinking of every imaginable question the justices might ask me, and what my answers would be.

Finally, unable to sleep, I got up, took a shower, dressed, and walked over to the Supreme Court through the crisp December air. As I walked, I felt completely resigned to the prospect that I was going to receive a hostile reception from the justices, but also confident that I had thought of every single question they might ask me and the best way to answer it. Some of the answers weren't great, but they were the best we could do and at least I wouldn't be caught surprised by any question. The facts and the truth concerning the *Brother Jonathan* were memorized by me, but such considerations do not necessarily mean that a case will be won. By any accounting, the State of California was a formidable opponent.

The Supreme Court Hearing

The Courtroom looks more like a medieval church than a court—extremely ornate and richly appointed. From high up on the marbled walls, imposing looking carvings and friezes—each rich in the symbolism and history of the law—stared down at me. I felt small. It was a long way from home for a humble country boy who grew up in a one room shack, sharing a single bed with three siblings.

By the time I was escorted to counsel table, the Courtroom was packed.

Because the case came to the Court on the State's petition, the State's attorney went first. I was expecting to see a "close test" between the justices and the State's attorney. However, I was shocked when, less than a minute into his presentation, the State's attorney began facing extremely hostile questions—from the liberal and conservative justices alike. He mentioned the Coeur d'Alene case, but the justices swept it away by noting that it was not an admiralty case, and that "Admiralty is different." As the justices continued to pepper my opponent, I did my best to suppress a grin, and shook my head in agreement with the justices' points. My faith in the highest court in the land and the proper [illegible] of the legal system began to be confirmed.

When my turn came and I took the lectern, the questioning was relatively gentle. Much of the argument had been [illegible] legal technicalities over the meaning and interpretation of the Eleventh Amendment. However, near the end of my presentation, Justice O'Connor (who, it later turned out, authored the Court's unanimous opinion in our favor) asked a question of me that cut right through all the legal technicalities and focused on the basic question of equity.

"Counsel, isn't it true that if we rule in favor of the State, your clients will have lost everything—all of that work and effort and time and expense—for nothing?"

To which I replied, "That's exactly right, your honor, and that would be fundamentally unfair."

I then sat down without saying anything more, knowing then that we had won.

That night a number of us gathered at a small private dinner party at a fine restaurant in Washington. We dined on prime steak, drank cognac, smoked cigars, and recounted the day until the wee hours. I hadn't slept in almost two days, but

incredibly I did not feel tired at all. Instead, I felt as if an incredible weight had been lifted from me, and I wanted to savor the night—and the feeling—as long as I could.

The Supreme Court's unanimous decision was announced on April 22, 1998—the day before my birthday. I can't imagine a better present!

Resolution

On March 9, 1999, Judge Louis Bechtle's court wrote the final chapter in the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* recovery:[1]

Judge Bechtle: Let's take 20 or 30 minutes and talk to these people about this because there is a very compelling reason to do so. Let me just make an observation to you. I am very familiar with this case because I have been here since the day we walked in court. In the time since then, we have been in and out of courts—a lot of courts—and the case has been very well fought, so to speak, by all sides here.

Now we have come to a point where I might say, and I have no hesitancy in saying, DSR, in my opinion, is a very responsible salvor. And we know of a lot of horror cases, such as where they salvage with clam buckets and all that sort of thing. And there has been severe archaeological damage in some instances in these other areas, but there hasn't been one complaint that I know of from any of the government agencies—whether that's the marshal's service or the Coast Guard people or anyone. Even in Crescent City, the Deep Sea Research people dealt with the local people fairly. That little town is very, very proud of its recognition over the years of the *Brother Jonathan*.

If you visit Crescent City, you will see they have *The Brother Jonathan* Memorial Park, [illegible] that they take care of very well. They are very proud of it and when you talk to them about *Brother Jonathan* it brings tears to their eyes. They don't want the money. They want the recognition for this location in history, as the site of the worst ship disaster, the greatest loss of life, in the history of the state of California up to that point in time.

DSR has entered into a contract with the Historical Society and Museum there, and they are very happy about that. They have a lot of non-gold items, hundreds of items that they are working on under the guidance of archaeologists and other professionals. The archaeologists have been hired by DSR and have been paid by them.

DSR on its '96, '97, '98 trips has spent millions of dollars. They have had 15 and 20 professionals other than the administrative people, crew members on these ships, 15 or 20 professionals, divers and the like, who have risked their own safety to bring about what's happened here.

And now what they're saying is, Judge, we spent millions of dollars and no matter who may own what, we are entitled under the law to a salvage award. We have to replenish our resources and it's a reasonable and fair approach to take.

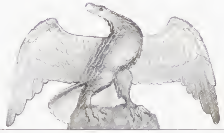
It is also compelling that the state of California has acknowledged that they also have very important interests in this wreck and it is important to the state and it is important to its citizens, and to the continued archeological interests that are embodied in that. It has also been done by permit, whether it's a state, local, federal, whatever the permits required. Everyone has been cooperative.

And unlike some of these operations, they didn't get 15 baskets full of things and walk away. They stayed with it, and I think they will try to stay with it.

That's the background here.

[1] Transcript from court records, lightly edited.

Appendix II



Listing of Coins Recovered

DEEP SEA RESEARCH*

$5 Half Eagles

Date	Grade	Quantity
1834	F-15	1
1835	F-15	1
1836	VF-20	1
1837	F-12	1
1838	VF-30	1
1839-D	VF-25	1
1840	F-12	2
1842-O	F-15	1
1843-O	G-4	1
1844	EF-40	1
1845	Net EF-45	1
1845	VF-35	1
1845	VF-25	1
1845	VF-20	1
1845	F-15	1
1845-O	VF-30	1
1846	VF-30	1
1847	VF-35	1
1847	Net VF-35	1
1847	F-15	2
1848	Net EF-40	1
1848-C	VF-35	1
1851	VF-35	1
1851	VG-10	1
1852	Net EF-45	1
1852	EF-40	1
1852	VF-20	2
1852-D	VF-35	1
1856	VF-35	1
1856	F-15	1
1856-S	VF-30	1
1857-S	F-12	1
1858-S	VF-35	1
1859-S	EF-45	1
1860-S	EF-40	1
1860-S	VF-35	1
1861	AU-50	1
1861-S	EF-40	1
1862-S	EF-40	1
1863-S	AU-50	1
1863-S	EF-45	1
1865-S	MS-64	1
1865-S	Net MS-60	1

$10 Eagles

Date	Grade	Quantity
1847	F-15	1
1861-S	EF-40	1
1865-S	MS-64	1

$20 Double Eagles

Date	Grade	Quantity
1850	VF-35	1
1852	EF-40	1
1852	VF-30	1
1853/2	EF-45	1
1855-S	EF-40	1
1855-S	VF-35	2
1856-S	MS-62	1
1856-S	AU-50	2
1857	EF-45	1
1857-S	AU-53	1
1857-S	AU-50	2
1857-S	EF-45	1
1857-S	EF-40	1
1857-S	Net EF-40	1
1858-S	AU-50	2
1858-S	EF-45	1
1858-S	EF-40	2
1858-S	VF-35	1
1858-S	VF-25	1
1859-S	AU-55	1
1859-S	AU-50	2
1859-S	EF-45	1
1859-S	Net EF-45	1
1859-S	EF-40	1
1859-S	VF-30	2
1859-S	Net VF-30	1
1860-S	AU-55	1
1860-S	Net AU-50	1
1860-S	AU-50	[illegible]
1860-S	EF-45	6
1860-S	EF-40	2
1860-S	VF-35	2
1860-S	Net VF-35	[illegible]
1860-S	VF-30	1
1861	AU-53	[illegible]
1861	AU-50	[illegible]
1861	Net AU-50	[illegible]
1861	EF-45	1
1861-S	AU-55	[illegible]
1861-S	AU-53	6
1861-S	AU-50	10
1861-S	EF-45	13
1861-S	Net EF-40	[illegible]
1861-S	EF-40	[illegible]
1861-S	Net EF-40	1
1861-S	Net EF-40	1
1861-S	Net EF-40	[illegible]
1862	AU-53	[illegible]
1862-S	Net MS-60	[illegible]
1862-S	AU-58	1

Date	Grade	Quantity
1862-S	AU-55	10
1862-S	AU-53	17
1862-S	AU-50	14
1862-S	EF-45	20
1862-S	EF-40	5
1863-S	MS-63	2
1863-S	MS-61	3
1863-S	MS-60	1
1863-S	AU-58	15
1863-S	Net AU-58	1
1863-S	AU-55	37
1863-S	Net AU-55	1
1863-S	AU-53	24
1863-S	AU-50	18
1863-S	Net AU-50	1
1863-S	Net AU-50	2
1863-S	EF-45	10
1863-S	EF-40	1
1864-S	MS-63	2
1864-S	MS-62	8
1864-S	Net MS-62	1
1864-S	MS-61	9
1864-S	MS-61	1
1864-S	MS-60	[illegible]
1864-S	AU-58	32
1864-S	Net AU-58	2
1864-S	AU-55	27
1864-S	AU-53	5
1864-S	AU-50	8
1864-S	Net AU-50	1
1864-S	Net AU-50	1
[illegible]	EF-45	1
1864-S	EF-40	[illegible]
[illegible]	AU-58	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	MS-65	14
1865-S	MS-64	[illegible]
1865-S	MS-63	100
1865-S	MS-62	[illegible]
[illegible]	Net MS-62	[illegible]

Date	Grade	Quantity
1865-S	Net MS-62	4
1865-S	MS-61	32
1865-S	Net MS-61	1
1865-S	MS-60	12
1865-S	Net MS-60	3
1865-S	Net MS-60	3
1865-S	Net MS-60	2
1865-S	AU-58	22
1865-S	Net AU-58	1
1865-S	AU-55	11
1865-S	Net AU-55	1
1865-S	Net AU-55	1
1865-S	Net AU-55	2
1865-S	Net AU-55	1
1865-S	Net AU-55	1
1865-S	Net AU-50	1
1865-S	Net AU-50	1

Grading by Professional Coin Grading Service and/or Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

$5 Half Eagles

Date	Grade	Quantity
1836	Circulated	1
1838	Circulated	1
1842-D	Circulated	1
1843	Circulated	1
1844-O	Circulated	1
1846-D/D	Circulated	1
1847-C	Circulated	1
[illegible]	Circulated	1
1852	Circulated	1
1853-D	Circulated	1
1855-S	Circulated	1
[illegible]	Circulated	1
1857-S	Circulated	1
[illegible]	Circulated	1
1861	Circulated	1
1863-S	Circulated	1

$10 Eagles

Date	Grade	Quantity
1849	Circulated	1
1856-S	Circulated	1

$20 Double Eagles

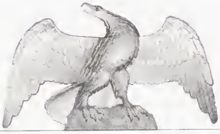
Date	Grade	Quantity
1852	AU	1
1855-S	Choice AU	1
1856-S	Circulated	2
1857-S	Circulated	2
1858-S	Circulated	5
1859-S	Circulated	6
1860-S	AU	4
1860-S	Circulated	3
1861	AU	1
1861-S	AU	6
1861-S	Circulated	5
1862-S	AU	16
1862-S	Circulated	3
1863-S	Uncirculated	2
1863-S	Circulated	23
1864-S	Uncirculated	9
1864-S	Circulated	31
1865	Choice AU	1
1865-S	Uncirculated	58
1865-S	Circulated	3

**Grades of coins not listed, as at time of publication the coins had not been certified.

DEL NORTE COUNTY MUSEUM

Date	Grade	Quantity
1858-S	$5 w/ coral encrustation	1

Appendix III



S.S. Brother Jonathan *Crew and Passenger List*

Crew and Passenger List

The following names of crew members and passengers aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* when she was lost at sea, July 30, 1865, are from contemporary accounts (1865) with later sources as noted.[1]

The exact number of passengers and crew members on the ship is unknown, as is the number of survivors. Representative of many accounts, the *San Francisco Call,* March 29, 1891, included this item as part of a retrospective story:

> The report of William Burnett, Supervising Inspector, says that she had on board when lost, as nearly as can be ascertained, 140 passengers and 50 other persons, being officers and crew, though the accounts in the San Francisco papers of the day account in various ways for 120 cabin and 72 steerage passengers and 50 as ship's complement. It is certain, however, that only 19 of the entire number were saved—11 men, five females and three children.

The following biographical notes indicate that as many as 21 people may have survived from a crew of at least 60 men and a passenger list of 142 individuals. In addition, it is virtually certain that other passengers were aboard the ship, but were not listed in any records.

After certain names in the following roster, *selected* news accounts are given (often essentially the same accounts were repeated elsewhere and in later editions of the same source).

Number Aboard

Selected accounts concerning the number of people aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan:*

> ***San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865:** Her crew, including officers, consisted of 54 men. The number of passengers on board, including children was 109; at least this is the number registered at the Company's Office in this city, but it usually happens that several passengers go on board at the last moment, and their names are not registered at the office....
>
> ***San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865:** We are informed that there were probably about 25 passengers on board the steamer, whose names were not registered at the office, here, and therefore not entered in the list printed yesterday. These, together with the 111 contained in the printed list, would make in the neighborhood of 140 passengers. The crew members numbered 54—thus making the total number of souls on board about 200.
>
> ***Alta California,* August 10, 1865** (from, J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City, August 6): The third mate, Mr. Patterson, had charge of the rescued boat, and it was soon learned that the *Brother Jonathan* left San Francisco, on Friday, noon, with about 150 cabin, 72 steerage passengers, and about 50 of the officers and crew. .
>
> ***Alta California,* August 10, 1865** (same issue as above, but with different figures): We are reluctantly led to believe that not another living person of the 240 on the ill-fated steamer, save the 19 [saved people] now here, will ever be found.
>
> ***San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 10, 1865** (Excerpt from the statement of G.W. Emery, lighthouse keeper at Crescent City, CA): The crew and passengers consisted of about 250 souls, as well as can be ascertained from the survivors, of whom 231 perished, and the remainder of the crew and passengers, 19 in number, came ashore in one of the ship's boats, were saved, and are now at Crescent City.

Number of Survivors

Selected accounts concerning the number of survivors of the wreck of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*

> **Account of a soldier.** On July 30, 1865, according to a soldier who was near the scene [illegible]: "... Those [crewmen] saved in the boat were as follows: four sailors, [illegible] Sevener, a [illegible], two firemen, [illegible], the baker, a Dutchman, and two waiters. Total 11. Those belonging to the ship passengers were: one English woman and [illegible], two Dutch women and one had a child, one girl of 10, and one Chinawoman and child. Total eight. Grand total 19."
>
> ***Alta California,* August 2, 1865** (Dispatch from Camp Lincoln, CA, July 31): At 2 p.m. yesterday, the steamer *Brother Jonathan* struck a sunken rock, and sank in less than an hour.

[1] General lists of passengers and crew members and later lists of then recovered bodies were printed in *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 2, 1865; *Alta California,* August 3, 14, 15, 17, 21, 28, 30, September 18, October 16, and 28, 1865, among other places.

[2] Esther Ruth Smith, *The History of Del Norte County, California,* 1953, pp. 66-67.

with all on board, except 16 persons, who escaped in a small boat, the only survivors of the ill-fated ship.

***Alta California*, August 3, 1865:** There were two boats swamped before the one that the 14 men and the woman and child made their escape in left.

***San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865** (From a dispatch from Crescent City, August 2, sent by James Patterson, third officer of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*): List Of The Saved: James Patterson, third officer; David Farrell, steerage steward; Henry Miller, baker, Patrick Linn, fireman; William Lowry, fireman; William E. Shield, waiter; Mrs. Mary Ann Tweedle; Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and child; Mrs. Martha E. Wilder; Mrs. Martha Stott and child; and four colored seamen.

The reader will notice a discrepancy between the statements in both dispatches and the list of names given in Patterson's dispatch. According to the "list" there were 11 men, 4 women and 2 children in the boat that came ashore, while one dispatch states that there were "17 adults and 3 children," and the other that there were 14 men, a woman and a child. None of the names of these four women is to be found registered at the office of the company in this city, and the explanation given is that they probably belonged to the party of seven women printed on the list as an appendage to the name of Mrs. John C. Keenan. Mrs. Keenan was the keeper of a lager beer saloon at Victoria, and the seven women under her charge were on their way thither as waiting girls.

***San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865** (From the statement of Jacob Yates, who was at the wheel when she struck the sunken rocks): "I had not seen Mr. Allen the First Officer until the Captain ordered our boat lowered, then he lowered one end of it. We got our boat clear from the wreck and astern of the ship. I did not see the Second Officer at all. When we came around the stern we saw a boat swamped, which was full of women, and one boat capsized with a man on her bottom, and also another one stove to pieces. Our boat was so full that we could not [illegible]."

***San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865** (Report from a special correspondent who had traveled on the *Del Norte* from San Francisco northward to the wreck site): From one of the crew [illegible] who was saved in the only boat which it is supposed got away from the vessel before she sank, and which was commanded by James Patterson, Third Officer of the ship. He says that there were 19 persons saved: 11 men, 3 white women, 2 children, and 1 [illegible] and child. There were two boats got down beside the one that reached shore, one containing ladies and the other gentlemen.

***Alta California*, August 10, 1865** (Report from [illegible] correspondent at Crescent City) [illegible] Yates, quartermaster: It was now 45 minutes since the collision, and the steamer was fast breaking to pieces. The Third Mate (Mr. Patterson) [illegible] the small boat and [illegible] five women and three children [illegible]. We are reluctantly led to believe that not another living person of the 200 on the ill-fated steamer save the 19 now here will ever be found.

***Alta California*, August 10, 1865** (Excerpt from statement of Mrs. Stott): She is positive that Yates, the Quartermaster, did all in his power to get others into this boat (the one boat that reached the shore), and says that the reason so many of the crew were saved was, that this being the smallest boat, the officers and gentlemen on board considered it less safe than the others, and sent all the ladies into the larger ones, which were lost.

***San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865** (Excerpt from the statement of G.W. Emery, lighthouse keeper in Crescent City, CA): The...remainder of the crew and passengers, 19 in number came ashore in one of the ship's boats, were saved, and are now at Crescent City.

***San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865** (Report from "An Occasional Correspondent," August 1): "There is very slight hope that any will be [saved], except the 20 who first came ashore with the news.

***San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894** (Retrospective commentary): Only 19 persons were rescued—four women, three children and 12 of the ship's crew. One of the women was American, one German, one English and one was Chinese. Not one male passenger was saved.

S.S. Brother Jonathan Crew List

Survivor

Allen, W.A. Henry • • • First officer. • • • Lost. • • • Allen was last seen by survivor Jacob Yates when Allen assisted in lowering one end of Allen's wooden surfboat.[1] Although Yates' account is not without contradictions, Allen also seems to have assisted with lowering one of the larger metal lifeboats filled with passengers, which capsized.[2] • • • Another survivor, Mary Ann Tweedale, recalled that Third Officer Patterson was in charge of her escape boat, and that: "First Officer Allen brought a bucket to bail out the boat with. Patterson asked Allen to get in, but he cried: 'No, no! Get away and God bless you!'"[3] • • • August 28, 1865, the *Alta California:* "Henry A. Allen...was a native of Baltimore and was born in the year 1820. He left home in his eleventh year and had followed the sea since that age.... He went to sea first as cabin boy on the ship *Racer,* but attained the honorable position of first officer at the age of 18, and never afterwards acted in a lower capacity. He was 10 years in the Liverpool Packet Line, and had been a very successful navigator; had sailed around the globe twice, and was captain of the ship *Nero* when she was burned in the China seas; he, however, managed to save all his passengers and crew after being five days without food or drink. Mr. Allen came to this coast in the year 1854, and early in the year 1855 he was employed by Capt. Wright as first officer of a steamer which was burned at Crescent City a short time after.[4] He was captain of the *Hartford* for several years, and was the gentleman who took the little steamer *Ranger* to Fraser River at the time of the great excitement in that region. This was a daring feat, as this vessel was only 18 tons burthen, and they were nearly four weeks making the voyage, being compelled to make post very often for the purpose of cutting their own wood. Mr. Allen was married in the year 1854 to Miss Frances Lucas, of Lewaigne, of Isle of Man. He was a man of generous impulses, kind, courteous and forbearing. He leaves a wife and four children, besides numerous friends, to mourn the sad fate of a brave man."

Anderson, William • • • Oiler. • • • Lost.[5]

[1] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865.

[2] *Alta California*, August 10, 1865.

[3] *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894; recently expressed recollection by Mary Altric, formerly Mary Tweedale, now living in Albany, Oregon. Allen's surname was misremembered as "Hallan."

[4] Presumably, the *America*, a propeller steamship of 922 tons, built in 1853 by William Brown, New York (listed by Gibbs as having sunk in 1855; by Marshall as having sunk in 1885).

[5] Names of crew members and passengers in this listing are from contemporary (1865) listings and newspaper accounts, if not credited otherwise.

Benton, John S. • • • Purser. • • • Body recovered. • • • In 1864 Benton had been purser of the *S.S. Senator.* He lived in San Francisco at 1107 Pine Street.[1] • • • On August 9, 1865, a correspondent of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* who had traveled north on the *S.S. Del Norte* to visit the wreck site, filed this report from an unnamed survivor: "The chief engineer, Mr. Mott; the purser, Mr. Benton; and J.A. Lord, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messenger, were seen standing in the purser's room door, when some of those who were saved came aft to get in the boat." • • • *Alta California,* August 15, 1865, included this item, datelined Crescent City, August 10, filed by J.G. Knower: "Trunks belonging to the following have been picked up: A.A. Stone, David Rowell, J.S. Benton." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 15, 1865, printed this from the account of a correspondent's trip from Eureka to Gold Bluff to patrol the beach for bodies: "At the mouth of Redwood Creek, about 8 miles below Gold Bluff, on Wednesday, August 9th, there was picked up a memorandum book, supposed to belong to John L. Benton, purser of the *Jonathan....* I have this book in my possession and will preserve it for his friends." • • • The funerals of John S. Benton and Charles H. Belden (passenger) took place on October 29, 1865. • • • *Alta California,* August 28, 1865: "John S. Benton...had followed the sea from early boyhood. He first went to sea before the mast, but being ambitious and trustworthy, had for several years acted as first officer before he came to the coast. He was long in the employ of the California Steam Navigation Company as purser on the river boats, before he went into the employ of Major Hensley, as purser of the *Senator,* from which he was transferred to the steamer on which he was lost. He leaves a wife and child to lament the loss of a kind husband and father." • • • *Alta California,* October 28, 1865, noted this: "The steamer *Del Norte* arrived from Humboldt last evening with the remains of J.S. Benton, purser of the ill-fated steamer, and Charles H. Belden, clerk of Major Eddy, U.S. Paymaster....:"

Brown, H.G. • • • Steward (alternatively, second steward). • • • Lost.

Campbell, James P. [or D.] • • • Second officer. • • • Lost. • • • During the final minutes of the ship's existence, Second Officer Campbell assisted passengers into a lifeboat. • • • J.H.G., a correspondent from Crescent City, reported this on August 6, 1865, from an interview with survivor Jacob Yates:[2] "[After one lifeboat had been launched] the Captain now ordered the Second Mate to lower his boat, already nearly filled with female cabin passengers, among whom was Mrs. General Wright. The boat was lowered, but before the seamen had time to man her, the steamer careened and upset her, throwing all on board into the water. The Mate (Mr. Campbell) drew up such of the ladies as he could reach from the steamer's chains, where he held on." • • • The account of survivor David Farrell included this:[3] "[The next boat that was lowered was on the starboard side of the ship, directly astern of the wheel. This was under the charge of Mr. Campbell, the second mate, and contained a large number of ladies, but was swamped before she was free from the davits; her stern was smashed in against the ship's side. The first officer, Mr. Allen, hauled her passengers on board ship again...." • • • *Alta California,* August 28, 1865: "James P. Campbell...was born in Wexford County, Ireland, in the year 1826, and went to sea in 1837, at the age of 10 years; has been going to sea ever since that date, and his experience was sufficient to recommend him as a seaman. He came to California, around the Horn, with Capt. Blethen; was married in the year 1858, and leaves two children, the oldest four years, and the other an infant seven months. Mr. Campbell was a free-hearted, liberal man, and leaves many friends to remember a brave and trusty sailor."

Lone Mountain Cemetery in San Francisco, the final resting place of Captain Samuel J. DeWolf, late commander of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.*

Clinton, John • • • Coal passer. Negro. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 Clinton had been a deck hand on the *S.S. Paul Pry.*[4]

Collenburg, A. • • • Fireman. • • • Lost.

Daulton, Richard • • • Steward. • • • Lost.

Deas, D. • • • Second pantryman. • • • Lost.

DeWolf, Samuel J., Captain • • • Captain of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* • • • Body recovered. • • • In 1864 Captain DeWolf was listed as captain of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan.* He resided at 423 Harrison Street, San Francisco. In 1864-1865 he remained in that position, but not continuously. • • • Captain DeWolf, General George Wright, Joseph A. Lord, and James Nisbet were seen standing on the deck of the stricken ship by Quartermaster Jacob Yates as the wooden surfboat carrying Yates and other survivors pulled away to safety. In the best nautical tradition, DeWolf went down with his ship. • • • Survivor David Farrell shared his memory of DeWolf's final words: "All hands, attend and try to save yourselves." • • • Survivor Mrs. Martha Stott told her story in the *Alta California,* August 10, 1865: "Mrs. Gen. Wright came to the side of the boat in which Mrs. Stott was saved, and was going to get in, but Capt. DeWolf, who seemed to think the boat too full already, took hold of her arm and walked with her towards the opposite side of the vessel where they were getting into a larger boat, which was swamped in lowering it into the water." • • • *Sacramento Bee,* August 11, 1865: "Martha E. Wilder, another of the survivors, says that when the ship struck she saw Mr. Belden on deck.... Afterward she saw [Belden] standing on the hurricane deck with two life preservers on and close to him stood General Wright, with his wife's arm locked in his, Captain DeWolf, and another gentleman supposed to be Major Eddy. There they all stood, bravely and calmly, until the waters covered them." • • • *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* (which contains numerous inaccuracies concerning the *Brother Jonathan*), p. 134, includes the following comment: "DeWolf had but little, [illegible] struck were carried to San Francisco and [illegible] from the [illegible] the man who was indirectly responsible for the disaster, [illegible]

1 Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864, p. [illegible]

2 Published in *Alta California* and the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 10, 1865.

3 *Alta California,* August 10, 1865.

4 Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864, p. 107.

5 Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864-65, p. 129.

6 *Alta California,* August 29, 1865. Report from J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City, August 6, describing the events aboard ship during the disaster, as reported by Yates.

7 *Alta California,* August 10, 1865.

that his life from that time on knew naught of pleasure.[1] As Patterson was leaving with his boatload, the brave Captain gave him his last order. 'Tell them,' said he, 'that if they had not overloaded us we would have got through all right, and this would never have happened.'" ••• **Tributes and Notes:** *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Captain DeWolf...has been running on this coast for about 15 years past. At the time Capt. Staples was killed in Portland, DeWolf was his mate, and upon his death succeeded Captain Staples to the command of the *Brother Jonathan*, which position he has had ever since. He is about 40 years of age and has a wife residing in this city. Capt. DeWolf was one of two or three persons who were saved from the steamboat *Lexington* which was burned in Long Island Sound in the winter of 1840.[2] He floated ashore on a bale of cotton." ••• *Alta California*, August 3, 1865: "He was a very quiet, reserved man, strictly attentive to his duties, and, if we are rightly informed, he never tasted intoxicating drinks. He has been regarded as highly trustworthy in every respect." ••• *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 4, 1865: "Captain S.J. DeWolf, master of the vessel, was a pioneer of 1849, since which time, with the exception of a few months, he had been employed in the coast navigation.... He was mate under Captain G.W. Staples, who was murdered by a blackleg named Ferd Patterson in Portland in 1861, when DeWolf took his place as commander. About six months ago, on the resignation of Captain P.F. Doling, he was assigned to the command of the steamer *Amelia* in the Napa trade, but was transferred again to the coast route when the company purchased the *Orizaba*, of which he took command until she was laid up. The loss of the vessel is no impeachment of his seamanship; striking a sunken rock in a fog 10 miles off shore is liable to happen to any coasting steamer." ••• *Alta California*, August 15, 1865: "He became a sailor when 16 years old, and was for a time engaged in the trade between New York and Liverpool, and afterwards between the former port and various foreign countries. In 1849 he came to this coast as first officer of the ship *Onward*.[3] As master of the brig *Fremont* he was one of the first to engage in the coasting trade of California after the discovery of gold. Since 1853 [*sic*, the company was founded in 1854] he had been in the employment of the C.S.N. Company.... As a seaman, a master of men under his command, a citizen, a friend, and a husband, he left an enviable reputation." ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1865: "Captain DeWolf was a native of [illegible] and at the time of his death was 43 years of age. At the early age of 16 he shipped on a small coasting schooner running upon our Northeastern coast, where many of our best navigators originate, and remained for several years in that trade. But longing for a broader field in which his rugged enterprise could accomplish more than in the [illegible] coasting traffic, he engaged in New York and Liverpool trade, and made 16 consecutive voyages across the Atlantic and afterwards to many different parts of the world. In 1849, during the great gold excitement, he sailed from New York in the ship *Onward* as first officer, bound for California, and arrived here in November of that year, and has remained on the coast ever since, earning and well deserving for himself the name of [illegible]. He will be long remembered by many of the pioneers of California as the commander of the brig *Fremont*, one of the first vessels which engaged in the coasting trade out of this port. Capt. DeWolf has been in the employ of the C.S.N. Company for the past 12 years, in whose service he made his last voyage. He was a thorough sailor, [illegible] as familiar to him as the quarterdeck; and as a friend he was all we regard as noble, conscientious, and gentlemanly, and above all strictly moral and temperate, a true Christian and a kind and indulgent husband, with the Bible and compass for his guide. He fell as on his last voyage, to our loss but his gain. True Friend—goodbye." ••• *Alta California*, August 28, 1865: "He bore the reputation of being an excellent navigator.... Having made several voyages with him, I always found him a quiet, generous hearted gentleman, and very attentive to his duty." ••• *Alta California* September 15, 1865: "The remains of the late Captain DeWolf...arrived from Humboldt by the *Del Norte*, on Wednesday night, and will be interred at Lone Mountain today."[4] ••• *Alta California*, September 16, 1865: Noted that as a tribute to their late fellow member DeWolf, the flag of the Association of Pioneers at Pioneers' Hall was dropped to half-mast the day before, and that a resolution had been passed to honor lost members DeWolf and J.C. Hunsacker. ••• *The Shipping Register*, September 3, 1927, included an article which had the wrong date of launching and the wrong early route, and gave other misinformation as well: "The famous *Brother Jonathan* was built at New York in 1852 for the Long Island Sound trade, but was sold on completion to go to the Pacific.... In the few years prior to 1865 the *Brother Jonathan* made a fortune for her owners. She was considered a very

[1] No source was cited by Lewis and Dryden for this psychoanalysis.

[2] On the night of January 13, 1840, the 488-ton steamer *Lexington* was en route from New York City to Stonington, Connecticut, with about 160 people aboard and a cargo of about 150 bales of cotton. She caught fire at sea in sub-zero weather, and in the ensuing tragedy all but four people died, although DeWolf was not listed in any known *contemporary* accounts of the survivors, although certain later commentaries placed him as a member of the crew. The full (or *nearly* full, if, indeed, DeWolf should have been included) story of the *S.S. Lexington* is told by Bowers in *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*, 1997. • The *Oregonian*, Portland, OR, August 15, 1865, included this: "Correction. The papers have been asserting that Captain DeWolf, of the *Brother Jonathan*, was an officer of the *Lexington* which was burned on Long Island Sound, January 13th, 1840, and that he escaped on a bale of cotton. The same statement was made from the pulpit of the First Baptist Church, Sunday. We have before us a list of the names of all the persons who were on board the *Lexington* at the time she was lost. DeWolf's name is not among them. Only four persons were saved from that vessel—one of these, Crowley, the second mate, floated ashore on a bale of cotton. One hundred and eighteen lives were lost. [From the] S.F. *Call*."

[3] *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, p. 133, states that DeWolf served as first officer on the *Onward* and sailed with that ship to the Pacific coast.

[4] Nathaniel Gray, San Francisco mortician and casket supplier to certain of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan*, was a proprietor of the Lone Mountain Cemetery (cf. Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 580). *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 469, described an event of November 1853: "The 'Lone Mountain Cemetery' projected. A tract of land 320 acres in extent, lying between the Presidio and the Mission, is to be laid out in a proper manner as a new resting place for the dead, the cemetery of Yerba Buena being considered, by the planners of the new ground, too near the city for a permanent burial place. The new cemetery is located near the well-known 'Lone Mountain,' situated three or four miles west of the plaza.... Very material and expensive improvements are being made upon the grounds, to adapt them for the purposes of a cemetery." The *Annals*, p. 538-539, told of the events of May 30, 1854: "The 'Lone Mountain Cemetery,' was solemnly dedicated today, when many interesting ceremonies were performed on the ground before a large assemblage of ladies and gentlemen. Col. E.D. Baker delivered an occasional address, Mr. F.B. Austin an ode, Mr. Frank Soule a poem, Bishop Kip the dedication address, and the Rev. F.T. Gray the closing address. Appropriate hymns and prayers hallowed the new 'city of the dead.' Herr Mengis, and the signers of the German Turnverein, performed the musical pieces. When noticing the projection of this cemetery, under date *November 1853*, we said, that the tract of land to be used for burial purposes was 320 acres in extent, and included the hill, or mountain, from which it took its name. That was the original intention of the projectors. Subsequently, it was found that 160 would form a sufficiently large cemetery, and to that extent the limits of the ground have meanwhile been reduced. The 'Lone Mountain' is not situated within the restricted boundaries, but adjoins them on the south. The present mode of access to the cemetery is by a circuitous route, nearly four miles in length, by way of Pacific Street and the Presidio. When the western extension of Bush Street is graded and planked, which is proposed to be done during the summer of 1854, the distance from the plaza to the magnificent gateway of the cemetery, about to be erected at the termination of that extension, will be about two miles."

fair traveler in her day when not too deeply loaded. The general opinion has always been that had she not been overstowed the fate which overtook her would have been averted.... On July 27, the day before she was scheduled to sail, her master, DeWolf, endeavored to induce the agent to stop receiving cargo, warning him she was already as deeply laden as she could run safety, even without the large number of passengers expected. The official who was acting in place of Major Samuel Hensley, the regular agent and vice president of the company, paid no attention to his remonstrances. He intimated that if the master did not wish to take the steamer out he could find a man who would. DeWolf said no more at the time, although he expressed his misgivings to a friend on the dock a few minutes before casting off...."

Domingo, L. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Douglass [or Douglas], Frederick S. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Dyer, Albert R. • • • Freight clerk of the ship. • • • Body recovered.[1] • • • In 1864 Dyer had been a clerk aboard the *S.S. John L. Stephens.* He resided in San Francisco on Beale Street between Harrison and Bryant streets.[2] • • • Thirty-three bodies had been found by August 17, 1865, among which some, including Dwyer [Dyer], had been identified.[3] Apparently, Dyer's body had been recovered floating in the sea by local boatmen.[4]

*Farrell, David** • • • Steerage steward or cabin boy. • • • Saved.[5] • • • In 1864 Farrell had been assistant steward aboard the *S.S. Pacific.*[6] • • • Farrell lived to give his recollections for the press, including his memory of Captain DeWolf's final words, "All hands, aft and try to save yourselves."[7] The captain ordered Farrell into a wooden surfboat and asked him to help the ladies climb in, while trying to keep the men out, the latter effort being unsuccessful. As Farrell's boat left the side of the ship, "John Hensley was the last man I spoke to, and his last words to me were, 'Keep cool, and save yourselves—goodbye!'" • • • *Alta California,* August 28, 1865: "David Farrell was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1840, and came round in the *Golden Age.* This gentleman, who is noted for his bravery and liberality, was in the employ of the Central Railroad Company, from Buffalo to New York, about four years. He acted the part of a sailor and a brave man in time of mortal peril."

Foster, John E. • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.[8]

Foster, William • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Fowler, James • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Francis, John • • • Second assistant engineer. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 Francis lived at 406 Vallejo Street, San Francisco.[9]

Franklin, Edward • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

Frederick, G. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.[10]

Gomez, Joseph L. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.[11]

Gonzels [or Gonzalas], A. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Gorman, John • • • Coal passer. • • • Lost.

Harvey, Arthur • • • Fireman. • • • Lost.

Hensley, John P. • • • Storekeeper. Also possibly a fireman.[12] • • • Lost. • • • Survivor David Farrell later recalled: "John P. Hensley brought two women and tried to get them into the [rescue] boat, but could not succeed; they begged him to let them go, which he did. Seeing that the two women would not get in, I said, 'John, you had better get in yourself,' but he said he would not, that he would stay and assist others in saving their lives. I then said, 'John if you will not go, give me a bucket.' He leaped from the hurricane to the upper or pilot deck, and gave me one of the fire buckets that were in a rack on the wheelhouse. I tried again to induce him to come, but he would not, saying that there were already enough in the boat. Mr. Allen then commenced lowering us down. John Hensley was the last man I spoke to, and his last words to me were, 'Keep cool, and save yourselves—goodbye!'... We were running quartering with the waves, which broke over us on nearly every crest, at times nearly filling the boat, and the last had it not been for the bucket that was given us by our brave-hearted shipmate, John Hensley, there would probably never have been a soul saved to give tidings of the terrible disaster." • • • *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 4, 1865, each printed this: "John Hensley, storekeeper, had sailed on the northern coast for a number of years, but does not appear to have signed the shipping articles [for the *Brother Jonathan's* last voyage], which accounts for the omission of his name. Deceased was 40 years of age, a native of Kentucky, and nephew of Major S.J. Hensley, of San Francisco." • • • *Alta California,* August 11, 1865: "Among those who were saved from the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan,* was Martha E. Wilder.... Her life was saved through the heroism of Mr. John Hensley, as she was thrown into the sea by the careening of the vessel and would have been lost but for his gallant conduct—grasping her, as it were, from the jaws of death, and placing her in Mr. Patterson's boat." • • • *Alta California,* August 28, 1865: "John P. Hensley, to whom the saved are indebted for their lives, was born in Buchanan County, Missouri, in the year 1837; came to California in the year 1853, in company with the family. He was engaged in the cattle trade for several years in Napa County, and was at one time in the business in this city, furnishing the government with supplies under contract, but owing to the depreciation of paper currency was compelled to throw up business after having lost several thousand dollars.[14] This placed him in very unfavorable circumstances, and a short time after his misfortune he went to sea. This was in the autumn of '63, from which date he has been running on the northern coast, on the California Steam Navigation Company's steamers. He was a man of amiable disposition, and generous to a fault. His motto was, 'Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you.'... He leaves two brothers and four sisters to mourn his untimely departure."

Herrlia, Manuel • • • Waiter. • • • Lost.

Hilton, John • • • Coal passer. • • • Lost.

Hutton, John T. • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

Johnson, Lewis • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

Laurend, C.F. • • • Watchman. • • • Lost.

[1] Body No. 15, "A. Dwyer," listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864-5, p. 143.

[3] *Alta California,* August 17, 1865, correctly as Dyer; *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865, as "A. Dwyer." *Alta California,* October 19, 1865, as "Dryer."

[4] *Alta California,* October 15, 1865, [illegible] from Crescent City dated October 9, 1865.

[5] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865. Listed as a "cabin boy" in *The New York Times,* August 26, 1865.

[6] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864-5, p. 130.

[7] *Alta California,* August 10, 1865.

[8] John E. Foster as part of crew list in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 2, 1865, later repeated in the *New York Times,* August 26, 1865; John L. Porter in *Lewis & Dryden.*

[9] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864-5, p. [illegible].

[10] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865; *Alta California,* August 3, 1865.

[11] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 2, 1865; *Alta California,* August 3, 1865.

[12] Hensley's name did not appear on the crew list or passenger list; apparently he did not sign on. In the *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 4, 1865, he is called a storekeeper. In the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865 a story [illegible] refers to him as a gentleman. However in the *Alta California,* August 10, 11, and 28, 1865, he clearly is a crew member, a hero, probably a fireman. [illegible] were the most heroic out of all the crew members. DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered* refers to him as a fireman.

[13] *Alta California,* August 10, 1865.

[14] It seems that Hensley was paid in the detested, depreciated Legal Tender notes, causing him to lose profits.

Law, Charles • • • Second cook. • • • Body recovered. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865, printed a listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City. Included was this notation: "Charles Law (Negro)."[1]

Law [or Laws], James • • • Second cook. • • • Lost.

Lee, Armand • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

Lee, Henry • • • Third cook. • • • Lost.

Lowery [or Lowry], William • • • Fireman. • • • Saved.[2]

Lynn [or Linn], Patrick • • • Fireman. • • • Saved.[3]

Malers, Frederick • • • Fireman. • • • Lost.

Miller, Henry • • • Baker. • • • Saved.[4] • • • On July 30, Greenleaf Curtis, a soldier who was near the scene, wrote this in his diary:[5] "...Those saved in the boat were as follows: four sailors, Negroes; Sevener, a comedian; two firemen, Irish; the baker, a Dutchman; and two waiters. Total 11. Those belonging to the ship passengers were one English woman and a boy of five, two Dutch women and one had a child, one girl of 14 and one Chinawoman and child. Total eight. Grand total 19." Presumably, Miller was the "Dutchman" (German) baker.

Miller, John • • • Pantryman. • • • Lost.

Moran, Stephen • • • Cabin boy or waiter. • • • Saved.[6] • • • In 1864 the only Stephen Moran listed in the *San Francisco Directory* was a porter at the United States Restaurant, San Francisco.[7]

Mott, Elijah • • • Chief engineer. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 he was listed in the *San Francisco Directory* as an engineer aboard the S.S. *Antelope*. He lived on the south side of Riley Street between Jones and Taylor streets.[8] Mott was an experienced seaman, having served aboard the Hudson River steamer *Empire* prior to seeking to further his career on the West Coast. As chief engineer of the *Brother Jonathan* he had charge of the power plant and other equipment. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865, included a report from an unnamed survivor: "The Chief Engineer, Mr. Mott, the purser, Mr. Benton, and J.S. Lord, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messenger, were seen standing at the purser's room door, when some of those who were saved came off to get in the boat." • • • *Alta California*, August 28, 1865: "Mr. Elijah Mott, chief engineer, was born in the State of New York, in the year 1828, and was an able engineer. He came to California in the steamer *Pacific*, as first assistant, under Mr. King.[10] Mr. Mott had been in the employ of the California Steam Navigation Company several years, and was thought highly of by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. He leaves a wife and four children." • • • *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, 1895: "Prior to his advent on the Coast he ran on the Hudson River as second assistant on the steamer *Empire*, where L.V. Hogeboom, the well known marine engineer, was with him for a short time. After leaving this position he served for a few months on a towboat in New York harbor and then started westward on the *Pacific*. He was in the Stockton line out of San Francisco about two years before he joined the *Brother Jonathan*."[11]

Elijah Mott, the chief engineer of the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*. (*Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*)

Patterson, James • • • Third officer. • • • Saved.[12] • • • Patterson was asleep in his bunk on the top deck when the impact occurred. He awoke and jumped into action to become one of the heroes of the disaster. He took command of a wooden surfboat and helped save nearly 20 people, the only survivors from the wreck. • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "The crew of the boat saved report that after leaving the ship Captain DeWolf ordered them back, because there were too many of the ship's crew aboard, and the officer—Patterson—started to return to the ship, when the crew threatened to kill him if he did so, which threat caused him to abandon his intention of returning." • • • J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City for the San Francisco newspapers, wrote this on September 6, drawing from comments made by survivor Jacob Yates:[13] "It was now 15 minutes since the collision, and the steamer was fast breaking to pieces. The Third Mate, (Mr. Patterson) who was asleep when the crash came, now lowered his small boat, and hurried on board five women and three children, who were nearest at hand. Ten of the crew leaped after him, including two wheelmen, steerage steward, and two fireman. The load was large for the boat, and she dipped incessantly, but the strong arm and coolness of the mate brought her 12 miles to Crescent harbor." • • • *Alta California*, August 28, 1865: "James Patterson, third officer, who acted a manly part in time of distress and peril, is a native of New York, and was born in the year 1833; came to this coast in the year 1859, and has been following the sea since 1847." • • • Survivor Mary Ann Tweedale recalled this:[14] "There was a general rush to the boats. Three were lowered and were capsized with

[1] Charles *Daw*, Negro, was listed as body No. 10 in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865. Also *Alta California*, August 17, 1865.

[2] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[3] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[4] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[5] Esther Ruth Smith, *The History of Del Norte County California*, 1953, pp. 66-67.

[6] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[7] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 291. Listed as a cabin boy in the *New York Times*, August 26, 1865.

[8] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 294.

[9] Don Marshall, *Oregon Shipwrecks*, 1984, p. 5.

[10] The *Pacific* was lost later off of Cape Flattery.

[11] Notwithstanding this statement, he was chief engineer of the *Brother Jonathan* during her trial run after extensive repairs in 1861; cf. *Alta California*, December 15, 1861.

[12] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[13] *Alta California* and San Francisco *Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865.

[14] Retrospective commentary printed years later in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894.

their passengers. Not far from where I was clinging, I discovered that a lifeboat was about to be launched. I made a great effort to reach it and succeeded, getting into it with several other women. It seems that the men who were gathered about the boat were from the ship's crew. A Chinese woman was helped in with her child. Her husband asked to get in, but was repulsed. He begged hard, but the sailors were firm. His cries were piteous and the parting between husband and wife was enough to wring even the hearts of those who whose only emotion was that of self-preservation. Third Officer Patterson was in charge of the boat. First Officer Allen brought a bucket to bail out the boat with. Patterson asked Allen to get in, but he cried: 'No, no! Get away and God bless you!'" • • • Survivor Mrs. Mina Bernhardt commented: "One of our crew attempted to cast loose the boat and suddenly she hung one end down, at a frightful angle, threatening to plunge us all into the water, but we clung to the boat, to the seats, to one another, I know not how, till the barkeeper loosened her at the other end, and we were let down. We cleared the steamer after almost incredible dangers.... As we left the ship we kept looking back. When borne on the crest of a wave we could see her. Then we would plunged down into the trough of the sea, and she would be lost to sight. At last we came up and she was gone. 'There,' exclaimed Mr. Patterson, 'the *Brother Jonathan* is no more! It's just 45 minutes since she struck.' Third Officer Patterson, although frightfully exhausted by his experiences in the rescued boat, returned with the searchers and remained until hope was gone."

Penn, William • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Perkins, James • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Rice, Charles • • • Waiter. • • • Lost.

Salinas, Mateo • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

***Seaman No. 1., Portuguese seaman, name not known** • • • Saved.[2] • • • This seaman and the three others listed below were survivors from the North Pacific whaling fleet ships captured and burned by the raider *Shenandoah*, and had arrived in San Francisco on July 20, 1865, aboard the *Milo*, this being slightly more than a week before they signed on with the crew of the S.S. *Brother Jonathan*.

***Seaman No. 2., Portuguese seaman, name not known** • • • Saved.[3]

***Seaman No. 3., Portuguese seaman, name not known** • • • Saved.[4]

***Seaman No. 4., Portuguese seaman, name not known** • • • Saved.[5]

***Sevener, Mr.** • • • Crewman. • • • Saved. • • • On July 30, Greenleaf Curtis, a soldier who was near the scene, wrote this in his diary:[6] "...Those [crewmen] saved in the boat were as follows: four sailors, Negroes; Sevener, a comedian; two firemen, Irish; the baker, a Dutchman; and two waiters. Total 11. Those belonging to the ship passengers were: one English woman and a boy of five, two Dutch women and one had a child, one girl of 14 and one Chinawoman and child. Total eight. Grand total 19."

***Shields, Edward [or William Edward]** • • • Waiter. • • • Saved.[7] • • • Edward Shields, waiter on the *Brother Jonathan*, was one of the few survivors. Subsequently, his account of the tragedy was printed in the San Francisco newspapers.[8]

Silva, J. • • • Seaman. • • • Lost.

Stevenson, Catharine • • • Stewardess. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 Miss Catharine Stevenson had been a stewardess aboard the S.S. *Senator*.[9]

Thompson, J. • • • Fireman. • • • Lost. • • • Several J. Thompsons were listed in the 1864 *San Francisco Directory*. A possibility for the *Brother Jonathan* crewman is John Thompson, mariner, who lived at 222 Commercial Street.[10]

Tierney, Thomas • • • Porter. • • • Lost.

Walker, Henry • • • Seaman. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 there was a listing for Henry W. Walker, occupation not stated, who lived in San Francisco at 2111 Stockton Street near Francisco Street.[11]

Welch, John W. • • • Cabin boy. • • • Lost.

White, G. • • • First assistant engineer. • • • Lost. • • • Possibly George White, an engineer who in 1864 lived on the east side of Montgomery Street near Vallejo Street, San Francisco.[12]

***Yates, Jacob** • • • Saved.[13] • • • The case of Quartermaster Jacob Yates is very peculiar. Nowhere in the accounts of survivors is there mention of him being a part of those who came ashore in the wooden surfboat, although Mrs. Martha Stott recalled that he tried to get others into the boat (see statement below). • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865, printed his statement of the events that occurred before and after the tragedy (quoted in Chapter 12), this being the most comprehensive accounting by any of the survivors. • • • *Alta California*, August 10, 1865 (adaptation from the statement of Mrs. Martha Stott): "She is positive that Yates, the quartermaster, did all in his power to get others into this boat [the one boat that reached the shore], and says that the reason so many of the crew were saved was, that this being the smallest boat the officers and gentlemen on board considered it less safe than the others, and sent all the ladies into the larger ones, which were lost."

TOTAL CREW MEMBERS: 60.

TOTAL SURVIVORS FROM THE CREW: 13.

S.S. *Brother Jonathan* Passenger List

The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865, stated that about 25 passengers were aboard whose names were not registered at the California Steam Navigation Co. office. These may be some of the names marked "Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts."

Other passengers were listed in the records kept of ticket sales by the California Steam Navigation Company. From these sources the following list has been compiled:

* = Survivor

Abrams, Henry • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California*, August 17, 1865: "In a report of the finding of the bodies of several of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan* disaster, published in yesterday's *Alta*, the body upon which pictures and a memorandum book were found [illegible]

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865, [illegible]. However, the *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 31, 1865, [illegible] Portuguese [illegible].

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Esther Ruth Smith, *The History of Del Norte County, California*, 1953, pp. 66ff. [illegible]

[7] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[8] Printed [illegible] in the present book. The account appeared in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865.

[9] *Langley's San Francisco Directory*, 1864, p. [illegible]

[10] *Ibid.*, p. [illegible]

[11] *Ibid.*, p. [illegible]

[12] *Ibid.*, p. [illegible]

[13] Yates is not mentioned in the list of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865, or in other listings at the time. However, his eyewitness testimony appeared in the *Alta California*, August 10, 1865, and the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, dated August 9, 10, 1865.

Edward Cardiff, a young man from Wisconsin, who came out here on the last steamer before the *Sacramento*, in company with three others, namely, Henry Abrams, Gilman Clendennu, the other name not known. They are from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and are known to a gentleman living in this city, on whom they called before leaving for Oregon."

Adams, Conrad • • • Lost.

Adams, Henry • • • Lost.

Adams, John • • • Lost.

Anchoine, J.L. • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Body recovered.[1] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored[2]), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine."

Annis, George W. • • • Lost.

Beitier [or Bertier], Moses • • • Lost.

Belden, Charles H. • • • Clerk to Major E.W. Eddy (U.S. paymaster) • • • Body recovered. • • • In 1864 Belden, a clerk in the Paymaster's Department in San Francisco, lived at 322 Sutter Street.[3] • • • *Alta California* October 28, 1865: "The funeral of Mr. Belden will probably take place tomorrow or on Monday. He was a young man of great promise ... He was a native of Lockport, New York, and was the only son of a widowed mother, who remains behind to mourn her irreparable loss. He had been for two years in the Paymaster's Department, as clerk for Major H.C. Ball, and on that officer resigning, took the same position under Major E.W. Eddy, and started him on his first and fatal trip to the North. He had gained for himself a reputation seldom attained by one so young....." • • • The funerals of John S. Benton (ship's officer) and Charles H. Belden took place on October 29, 1865.

Bell, Thomas Hazelrigge • • • Bought ticket after boarding the ship.[4] • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California*, August 6, 1865: "Among the passengers who did not buy tickets until after going on board, and whose names were therefore omitted from the list heretofore published, were T. Hazelrigge Bell, late of 32 Second street, S.F., formerly clerk to Messrs. Henderson & Burnaby, Victoria, V.I. [other passengers were also listed]

Bernhardt [Bernhart], Mina, Mrs. • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. Mrs. Mina Bernhardt (or Bernhart) was traveling with her son Paul.[5] • • • Saved.[6] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.... Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt, Miss M.C. Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865: "Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and her son Paul, who were among the saved, were in no way connected with the party of Mrs. Keenan. Mrs. B is a German lady of respectable family and was on her way to Victoria to join some relatives living in the British Possessions."[8] • • • In a retrospective commentary on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* printed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894, Mrs. Bernhardt furnished her view of the disaster (quoted earlier in the present text).

Bernhardt [Bernhart], Paul • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. Son of Mrs. Mina Bernhardt. • • • Saved.[9]

Berry, Mary, Miss. • • • Lost. • • • Miss Mary Berry was a "niece of the Arrigonis, popular hotel owners in Portland."[10] This would have been S.N. Arrigoni of the Pioneer Hotel at the corner of Front and Washington streets and other Arrigoni family member(s). In 1864 a Miss Mary Berry was listed as a domestic (housekeeper or maid) at 14 Stanley Place, San Francisco.[11] • • • *Oregonian*, August 4, 1865:[12] "Miss Mary Berry, niece of Mrs. S.N. Arrigoni, had made a pleasant voyage from Europe to San Francisco, on her way to join her relatives in this city. She, too, is lost. Mr. Arrigoni has gone to the scene of the disaster, with the hope of securing the remains...." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1865: "The body of a young girl was found on the 9th, about 4 miles from the lighthouse off Eureka,[13] by the beach patrol.... The name of Mary Berry was written with indelible ink on (her) chemise. Around her neck was a cross and a small purse containing an Agnus Dei [an amulet often worn by devout Catholics] and which was recognized by the members of that church here, who took charge of the body. It was brought over to Eureka and was buried at Bucksport today. A large number of citizens followed her remains to the grave. She was about 17 years of age, and had been very pretty." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (supplementary list of identified bodies): "There has been found...at Humboldt Bay the body of Miss Mary Berry." • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "The body of a young girl was found on the 9th, about four miles from the lighthouse off Eureka, by the beach patrol. Her hair was auburn, eyebrows fair and very heavy. The only clothing she had on was a chemise, a nightgown and a red blanket. The body was delivered to Father Thomas Creiman [*sic;* later spelled Crinnian], and was buried today. She looked very natural when she came ashore, but soon after changed very much. The life preserver she wore can be obtained at Eureka. A large number of citizens followed her remains to the grave. She was about 17 years of age and had been very pretty indeed." • • • *Alta California* August 21, 1865: "Wanted, the *Brother Jonathan*: "The relatives of Miss Mary Berry, one of the wrecked passengers of the *Brother Jonathan, and* whose remains were found on the beach at Humboldt Bay and buried in Bucksport, on the 10th inst. will please communicate for particulars with the undersigned. Thomas Crinnian, Catholic Pastor. *Bulletin* copy.[14] Humboldt Bay." • • • *Alta California,* August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet, Esq., Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil...."

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[1] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 16; 1865; *Alta California*, August 17, 1865. Body No. 18 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865. *The Oregon Reporter,* August 5, 1865: "I.L. Ancheme," body no. 18.

[2] "Colored" probably meant dark-skinned, as Portuguese or Polynesian, not Negro (for Negro was used as a separate description for another passenger)

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 66.

[4] *Alta California*, August 6, 1865. Not on list in DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered.*

[5] *Alta California*, August 3, 1865; *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[6] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[7] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and her son Paul.

[8] The implication is that the "party of Mrs. Keenan" was less than "respectable."

[9] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865.

[10] Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*: Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, September 1959, Vol. 60, p. 350.

[11] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 68.

[12] This item was repeated in the *Oregon Statesman*, August 7, 1865.

[13] Eureka, CA, is about 90 miles to the south of Crescent City.

[14] "Bulletin copy" probably suggests that Pastor Crinnian sent the notice to the *Alta California* and requested that it let the other newspaper know, or it may suggest that the former paper scooped the latter with this item.

Berton, Joseph • • • Lost.

Billinsky [or Billmisky], William • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865: "Among the lost passengers on the *Brother Jonathan* was...Wm. Billinski, who had resided in the vicinity of Hayward and San Lorenzo for six years. He had on his person about $800 in coin, collected by him in Alameda County for a friend in Idaho, whither he was bound. He was about 28 years of age."

Bisner, C. • • • Lost.

Bonn [or Binn], J.S. • • • Lost.

Brooks, N.C., Mrs. • • • Lost. • • • Mr. Platt [Plass] lost two daughters and a grandchild (*Alta California*, August 17, 1865). A Mr. Placer [Plass] searched for his two lost daughters (*Alta California*, October 16, 1865). • • • The other daughter is listed in the present account as Miss Mary Plass (alphabetized under P).[1] • • • *Oregonian*, August 4, 1865: "The most painful affliction is that felt by the husband and father for the loss of his wife and children, as in the case of Capt. N.C. Brooks, of the bark *Cambridge*, who was waiting with his vessel to be rejoined by his family, before proceeding on the voyage to Honolulu. They had left here when last in port upon a visit to the father of Mrs. B., in California, and were coming to again form the family circle in the cabin of the *Cambridge*, but are lost forever on land and sea to the generous and kind hearted father...." • • • *Alta California*, August 17, 1865: "Capt. N.C. Brooks, owner of the barque *Cambridge*, has just arrived from the scene of the wreck, where he has been looking for the remains of his wife, child and [wife's] sister [Miss Mary Plass].... The *Cambridge* sailed twice around the scene of the late disaster. The sea was smooth and the weather fine. Sounded, but found no bottom at 210 feet. Saw no signs of a wreck except a floating bucket rack." • • • Later, the *Cambridge* sailed to Hawaii as per its earlier schedule. • • • *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, p. 134: "Among scores of others whose hearts were saddened by the disaster was Capt. N.C. Brooks of the bark *Cambridge*, which had just arrived at Portland from Honolulu, and who was waiting for his wife and children to join the vessel and sail to the Islands with him."

Brooks, N.C. Mrs., child of • • • Lost.

Canel [or Carrell], G. • • • Lost.

Cardiff, Edward C. • • • Young man not on the passenger list, but identified from other accounts. Body recovered.[2] • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865 (Excerpt from correspondence from Mr. Dugan of Crescent City, received in Jacksonville, August 14 and printed in the *Sentinel*): "I have also just received a letter from Solomon Hall, of Gold Bluffs, 30 miles south of this, stating that a piece of wreck with a dead man on it came ashore at that place on Thursday night. On his person were found photographs of ladies and others; a memorandum book, with name of Ed. C Arduff in it;[3] also, a $20 Confederate note. The portion of the wreck is described as the part between the wheelhouses, full width of the ship and about 40 feet long." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1865 (excerpt from a correspondent's trip from Eureka to Gold Bluff to patrol the beach for bodies): "Above Gold Bluff, on Tuesday, August 8th, was found a memorandum book with the name of Ed. Cardiff." • • • *Alta California*, August 17, 1865: "In a report of the finding of the bodies of several of the victims of the *Brother Jonathan*'s disaster, published in yesterday's *Alta*, the body upon which pictures and a memorandum book were found was described as that of Edward C. Arduff. We learn from an acquaintance of deceased that his real name was Edward Cardiff, a young man from Wisconsin, who came out here on the last steamer before the *Sacramento*, in company with three others, namely, Henry Abrams, Gilman Clendenniu, the other name not known. They are from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and are known to a gentleman living in this city, on whom they called before leaving for Oregon. Cardiff has a brother in Oregon in the lumber business." • • • *Alta California*, August 26, 1865: "In addition to the list of bodies found, already published, we received the following by the *Del Norte*, buried at Gold Bluff and vicinity. [The bodies of Col. Cardiff and R.S. Manly; the remainder being unidentified.]"

Chaddock, Captain J.S.S., U.S.R.S. • • • Lost. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Capt. Chaddock came to this country in 1849 on the *Lawrence* and had been in service on the coast ever since. For several years past he has been in command of the Revenue Cutter *Joe Lane*." • • • *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 4, 1865: "Capt. J.S.S. Chaddock, of the United States Revenue Service, was also one of the lost. He was about 54 years of age and was on his way to join his vessel, the *Joseph Lane*, at Astoria."

Charlton, John, Mrs. • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts.[4] Mother traveling with two young sons. • • • Lost. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865: "Mrs. Charlton, the wife of John Charlton, a deputy in the Clerk's office at Idaho City, and her two boys, were on board, as well as Miss Eliza Davis, whose parents live at The Dalles. All the parties had just returned from Tehama County, on a visit to their friends and relatives. Mrs. Charlton is the daughter of John Freeman, formerly District Attorney of Tehama County, and Miss Davis is a niece of Henry Wilson, a well known citizen of the same place." • • • *Alta California*, August 4, 1865: "Among passengers were Miss Eliza Davis of The Dalles, and Mrs. John Charlton, wife of a deputy in the Clerk's office at Idaho City, and daughter of John Freeman, Esq., of Tehama County, with her two sons. They had been to Tehama County on a visit, and were returning home."

Charlton, John, Mrs., son No. 1 • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. Traveling with mother and brother • • • Lost.

Charlton, John, Mrs., son No. 2 • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts.[5] Traveling with mother and brother • • • Lost.

Chinese woman, name not known • • • Saved. • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "It is also said that a Chinaman who got into the boat was killed by a blow from an oar in the hands of one of the crew. His wife and child were among the saved." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865: "From one of the crew (Edward Shields) who was saved in the only boat which it is supposed got away from the vessel before she sank, and which was commanded by James Patterson, third officer of the ship, I learn that there were 19 persons saved—11 men, 4 white women, 2 children and 1 Chinawoman and child."[6] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 8, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.... Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt,[8] Miss M.G. Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew."[7] • • • Survivor Mrs. Tweedle Altrie recalled:[9] "There

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[1] An account from the *San Francisco Call*, August 5, 1865, quoted in Chapter 18, ties together the Plass and Brooks families.

[2] *Alta California*, August 26, 1865. Not on list in DSR's *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*.

[3] Actually Ed C. Cardiff (cf. *Alta California*, August 17, 1865).

[4] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865; *Alta California*, August 4, 1865. Not on list in DSR's *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*.

[5] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865; *Alta California*, August 4, 1865.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Alta California*, August 10, 1865.

[8] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and child.

[9] *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894, retrospective commentary. Some later historians have assumed that this was Mrs. H.C. Lee; however, contemporary records (furnished by the Circus World Museum) reveal that

was a general rush to the boats. Three were lowered and were capsized with their passengers. Not far from where I was clinging, I discovered that a lifeboat was about to be launched. I made a great effort to reach it and succeeded, getting into it with several other women. It seems that the men who were gathered about the boat were from the ship's crew. A Chinese woman was helped in with her child. Her husband asked to get in, but was repulsed. He begged hard, but the sailors were firm. His cries were piteous and the parting between husband and wife was enough to wring even the hearts of those who whose only emotion was that of self-preservation."

Chinese woman's husband, name not known ••• Lost. ••• *The Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "It is also said that a Chinaman who got into the boat was killed by a blow from an oar in the hands of one of the crew. His wife and child were among the saved."

Chinese woman's child, name not known ••• Saved. ••• Chinese child saved with his or her mother, per the earlier-quoted accounts.

Church, George ••• "Colored." Bought ticket after boarding ship.[2] ••• Body recovered. ••• *Alta California*, August 6, 1865: "Among the passengers, who did not buy tickets until after going on board, and whose names were therefore omitted from the list heretofore published, were Church, (colored,) also of Victoria, VI [other passengers were also listed]." ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, [illegible], G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. [illegible] Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [illegible], James E. [illegible], J. Strang, J.H. Anchome."

Church, Jane, Mrs. [and/or Mrs. James] ••• "Colored."[3] ••• Body recovered.

Clendennin [or Clindruaid or Clindman, or other variation], Gilman ••• Lost. ••• *Alta California*, August 17, 1865: "Edward [illegible], a young man from Wisconsin, came out here on the last [illegible] *Sacramento*, in company with three others, namely, [illegible] Clendennin, [illegible] other name not known. They [illegible] Wisconsin, and [illegible] known to a gentleman living in this city [illegible] before leaving for Oregon."

Connell, James ••• Lost.

Craig, Annie [or Anna], Mrs. ••• Lost.

Craig, D. ••• Lost.[4]

Craig, John R., S.P. ••• Lost.

Crandall, D. ••• Lost. ••• [illegible], August 4, 1865: "Mr. Crandall, of the firm of Crandall & [illegible], is also among those who were not saved. His [illegible] wife and four children [illegible] in this city [illegible] sympathizing."

Crawford, M. ••• Lost.

Dalziel, William A. ••• Lost. ••• *Oregon Statesman* August [illegible], 1865: "The *Sacramento Union* adds the following: Wm. A Dalziel and Samuel E. Forsee, formerly of this city, and lately of Dayton, Nevada, were passengers on the ill fated *Brother Jonathan*. They were partners in the drug business, and had recently closed their establishment at Dayton with a view of establishing themselves at Salem, Oregon. Forsee leaves a young wife who is now living in this city." ••• *Sacramento Union*, August 29, 1865: "Probate. Estate of William Dalziel, deceased—petition of H. Miller for letters of administration, continued for hearing until Monday next."

Davis, Eliza, Miss. ••• Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. ••• Lost. ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August [illegible], 1865: "Mrs. Charlton, the wife of John Charlton, a deputy in the Clerk's office at Idaho City, and her two boys, were on board, as well as Miss Eliza Davis, whose parents live at The Dalles. All the parties had just returned from Tehama County, on a visit to their friends and relatives. Mrs. Charlton is the daughter of John Freeman, formerly District Attorney of Tehama County, and Miss Davis is a niece of Henry Wilson, a well known citizen of the same place."

Dawson, T. [or H.] ••• Lost.

Definnie [or Defirnie], H. ••• Lost.

DeRutte, Edward ••• Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. ••• Lost. ••• In 1864 DeRutte was listed as an importer of wines and liquors at 431 Battery Street, San Francisco. He lived at 1120 Stockton Street. ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865: "Among the passengers was Mr. Ed deRutte, French importer of this city whose name did not appear in the passenger list. He embarked on the steamer late, and his name was not registered at the office."

Dwyer, Patrick ••• Lost.

Eddy, Ellery W., Major, U.S.A. ••• Lost. ••• In 1864 Maj. Eddy, U.S.A. paymaster, had his office at 742 Washington Street, San Francisco. He lived at the Union Club Rooms.[7] ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Maj. Eddy was a paymaster in the army, and entered the service in 1861 [as a lieutenant]. At his particular request he was allowed to change off with Maj. Fay, who was first designated for the post." ••• *Alta California*, August 4, 1865:[8] "Major Eddy was a resident of this coast since 1849, and was 35 years of age at the time of his death. He was born in Newport, Rhode Island. He was unmarried. He leaves two brothers, one of whom is now in the army. Before entering the army he was a partner in the firm of Newhall, Eddy & Co., auctioneers. When he left on the *Brother Jonathan* he had in his possession $200,000 in Legal Tender notes for the payment of troops at Fort Vancouver and other posts in Oregon and Washington." ••• *Sacramento Bee*, August 11, 1865: "Martha E. Wilder, another of the survivors, says that when the ship struck she saw Mr. Belden on deck.... Afterward she saw [Belden] standing on the hurricane deck with two life preservers on, and close by stood General Wright, with his wife's arm locked in his, Captain DeWolf, and another gentleman, supposed to be Major Eddy. There they all stood, bravely and calmly, until the waters covered them." ••• *Congressional Globe*, April 9, 1866, testimony from Mr. Nesmith as part

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Lee was not Chinese, but was an Englishman. Thus, it is not likely (although the possibility exists) that his wife was Chinese. In any event, the Lee surname is British.

[1] *Alta California*, August 10, 1865.

[2] *Alta California*, August 6, 1865. Body No. 5 in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865.

[3] *New York Times*, August 26, 1865, as Mrs. Jane Church, "colored."

[4] Not on list in DSR, *S.S. Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*.

[5] Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*: Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, September 1959, Vol. 60, p. 350, gives his first initial as M.

[6] A related account was printed in the *Alta California*, August 4, 1865.

[7] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 207. Less than a year after the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy, the *Alta California*, April 17, 1866, reported on a tragedy of a different sort, a terrific explosion of nitroglycerin that occurred the day before, wreaking havoc on several buildings including where Eddy had once lived (excerpt): "Our reporter gained admission through the Union Club rooms, over Wells, Fargo & Co.'s, and on reaching the rest of the building a scene of ruin, which utterly beggars description, met the eye. The large one story structure containing the office and billiard saloon of the Union Club, over the arched gateway which leads into the rear of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s from California Street, was an entire wreck, the end being blown out, the door torn into splinters, the iron roof rolled up like a piece of wallpaper, the rafters hanging loose in every direction, furniture smashed, and billiard tables crushed by the weight of the debris. The brick kitchen of the Union Club, which stood in the area in the rear of Wells, Fargo & Co., was gone entirely, only fragments of the timber lying here and there among the debris which filled the area."

[8] Similarly, *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 4, 1865, and other newspapers.

of a congressional effort to free Eddy's estate from any obligation concerning the $200,000 in government funds he was in charge of on the ship: "They report the testimony of several officers who saw the money counted and put in the safe and taken on board the vessel. In addition to that is the protest signed by 18 passengers who escaped in small boats [*sic*], and they state positively that Major Eddy did not escape." Earlier, there had been allegations that Eddy had escaped safely from the ship, with the money. Congressman Ashley of Ohio had commented, "When I was in California I learned from gentlemen there that part of the bonds belonging to the government, and which were in the same safe with the money purporting to have been lost on this steamer, had been offered for sale in California. I want to ask the gentleman whether the committee have had any evidence of that kind before them." That said, Ashley ruminated for a moment, then commented: "I beg pardon. I find that I am confounding this case with another case in which a steamer was lost." The bill was reported to the Senate, and after the third reading was passed. • Related to the preceding is an affidavit, not dated, preserved in the National Archives: "Charles A. Haskin, Clerk, Pay Department, U.S. Army, being first duly sworn says that he assisted the late Major E.W. Eddy, Additional [assistant] paymaster, U.S. Army, in counting and receiving Two Hundred Thousand Dollars ($200,000.00) U.S. Treasury notes from the Assistant Treasurer of the U.S. at San Francisco, Cal., and that such count was correct and the affiant further says that on the 27th day of July 1865 he packed the said Two Hundred Thousand Dollars ($200,000.00) in an iron safe or box and saw a seal placed over the keyhole of said box with Major Eddy's name thereon. Afterwards on the morning of July 28, 1865, the affiant saw the same box sealed as aforesaid in Major Eddy's stateroom on board the steamship *Brother Jonathan* bound for Portland, Oregon. (Signed) Charles A. Haskin."

Forbes, Miss. • • • Lost.

Forsee, Samuel F. • • • Lost. • • • *Oregon Statesman* August 14, 1865: "The *Sacramento Union*, adds the following: Wm. A Dalziel and Samuel F. Forsee, formerly of this city, and late of Dayton, Nevada, were passengers on the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan*. They were partners in the drug business, and had recently closed their establishment at Dayton with a view of establishing themselves at Salem, Oregon. Forsee leaves a young wife who is now living in this city." • In 1861, Samuel F. Forsee had been listed in the *Sacramento Directory* as a clerk at 192 J Street, corner of 7th.

Frazer, Robert M. • • • Lost.

Frites [or Trites], James E. • • • Body recovered.[1] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (Listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine." • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "[Body] No. 16, a man supposed to be James L. Trites [sic, another spelling variation], from a telegraph dispatch found on the person, from Samuel Hilder, Rochester, dated June 9th."

Gay [or Gar or Gray], J.G. • • • Lost. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865: "J.G. Gay[2] and wife had arrived from the East on the last steamer, and were on their way to Salem, Oregon, where he intended to enter upon the practice of the law. They were married in Collinsville, Pennsylvania, where her mother resides, on the 28th of June last. Mr. Gay was a native of Morgantown, western Virginia, where he leaves a mother and three sisters. His father now deceased, was formerly one of the most prominent lawyers in Virginia." • • • *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 4, 1865: "J.G. Gay, a young lawyer just come out from Pennsylvania with his wife, who were seeking a home on the banks of the Columbia."

Gay [or Gar or Gray], J.G., Mrs. • • • Lost.

Geddes, J.S. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 the firm of Boswell & Geddes (S.B. Boswell and J.S. Geddes) was located at 319 Front Street and specialized in "wholesale butter, cheese, eggs, lard, etc." Boswell resided at 107 Powell Street. Geddes lived at 1209 Taylor Street.[3] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "J.R. Geddes of the firm of Bosworth & Geddes, well known Front Street merchants, [was] among the passengers."[4]

Gullan, Thomas • • • Lost.

Hefron, M.L. • • • Lost.

Hemsley, Mrs John • • • Lost. • • • A copy of this letter by the widower of Mrs. Hemsley is preserved by the J. Porter Shaw Library of the National Maritime Museum:[5] [Stationery of the Legislative Department, Senate Chamber] "Sacramento, January 26, 1866; [To] William Hemsley; Dear Brother & Sister, It is a long time since I heard from you until today. I heard through Mr. Thomas Potts who gave me your address.... Now I would like to know all about you, what you are doing and how you are doing, how many of a family you have what their names are and how old they are. I should like all your likenesses if it is possible to get them. I would send you mine now if I thought you would get my letter all safe. How I long to hear from you once more. I had not known what had become of you since the War. I suppose you know of my loss long before this, but thinking you do not I will now proceed to tell you. In January 1865 I went alone up to the Gold Mines of Idaho Territory leaving my wife and boy in this City. In June of the same year I sent for them to come to me. They started on the 27th [sic] of July from San Francisco to come by sea to Portland, Oregon and thence to Idaho to me. On the 30th the steamer went down and all hands but 19 were lost. All that was near and dear to me on this earth was lost to me forever. Oh how I do miss them. My boy was over six years old when he was lost.... I do not think that I ever was made to live alone. I am almost crazy now when I think of it. I lost a true and loving wife and an idolized and worshipped little boy.... In 1863 & 4 I was sergeant at arms in the Senate of this state. This winter I am employed about the Legislature. About one month from now I go up to Idaho again where you must address your letters to me. My address is John Hemsley, Placerville, Boise County, Idaho Territory. I expect to receive a letter from you as soon as I arrive there which will be about the middle of March.... Women are very scarce out here yet. It is very hard to find a good wife if you do want one. I suppose you have plenty of widows out there since the War. I have little more that I can say to interest you till I hear from you and see all your pictures.... [illegible] ever come back to the states again or not? [illegible] Rail Road done. I would like to see you before I die [illegible] God bless you. Your Brother John Hemsley."

Hemsley, child (son of Mrs. John Hemsley) • • • Lost.

Henry, Anson Gordon, Gov. • • • Anson G. Henry, a medical doctor, was the new governor of Washington Territory. • • • Lost. • • • Henry, newly named as the governor, had served the state in various capacities for many years, beginning with his election on June 5, 1854 to the legislative assembly of the territory.[6] Before that time

[1] Body No. 16, "James L. Trites," [illegible] published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865.

[2] Surname given as "Gar" in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3 and 7, and in the *Sacramento Union*, August 3.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, [illegible].

[4] Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*: Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, September 1959, Vol. [illegible], p. [illegible]. Geddes lived in Portland.

[5] Edited for spelling (e.g., "untill" changed to "until"), and put into sentence form [illegible] original was mostly long run-on sentences without periods. No words have been added [illegible] the original text. The letter copy was furnished to the National Maritime Museum by [illegible], who believed that the writer was her great great uncle.

[6] George H. Williams, "Political History of Oregon 1853-65," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, 1901.

he had a long record of public service with Oregon. • • • *Biographical Notes:* 1837: Henry, an activist in the Whig party and a Springfield physician of good reputation, was named by the State Legislature as a commissioner to supervise the erection of the new Illinois State House in that city. One of his closest personal friends was Abraham Lincoln. In June of the same year the *Illinois Republican* published a defamatory article, stating that Henry "is squandering disadvantageously and uselessly the public money appropriated by the citizens..." and that a committee should be formed to investigate. However, the *Sangamo Journal,* July 1, 1837, noted that the committee made its investigation and published a report completely exonerating Dr. Henry. The *Sangamo Journal* was friendly to both Henry and Lincoln. On August 7, 1837, Henry was the Whig candidate in the election for the hotly contested office of probate of justice of the peace. His opposition, James Adams, had come to Illinois from New York City. It developed that in the latter place accusations had been made that Adams had illegally acquired title to 600 acres of land by forging a deed; the charges had not been resolved by the time of Adams' death in 1843. Despite the backing of Lincoln and many others--Lincoln wrote some anti-Adams letters to the *Sangamo Journal* under the pseudonym, "Sampson's Ghost"–Henry's 792 votes came in a distant second to Adams' 1,025.[1] • • • 1839, October 8: At the Whig convention Anson G. Henry, Abraham Lincoln, and others were appointed to the State Central Committee. An opposing journal stated that these people were appointed exclusively with reference to their supposed "stumping" abilities," referring to their abilities as speakers on the circuit throughout the state. • • • 1840-1841: In 1840, Lincoln strongly endorsed Henry for the position of postmaster of Springfield. At the time, Henry was Lincoln's personal physician. In January 1841, Lincoln, serving in the State Legislature, became severely depressed when his romance took a wrong turn, but seemingly recovered under Dr. Henry's care, a relationship that firmly cemented the friendship between the two. Later, when Lincoln became engaged to Mary Todd, Anson G. Henry was one of only two people to be told before the couple's plans were publicly announced. • • • 1842: On August 29, Dr. Henry wrote to Henry Clay, of Lexington, KY, requesting that as Clay was going to visit Indianapolis, IN, soon, it would be desirable if his itinerary could be extended to include Springfield, IL, where Henry, Lincoln, and other members of the "Clay Club" would be pleased to welcome him. Clay declined on December 6, 1842, but expressed appreciation of the invitation. • • • 1843: The state of Illinois filed a lawsuit against Henry seeking the return of certain funds relating to the construction of the State House; a judgment against Henry in the sum of $271 was awarded. • • • 1844: Dr. Henry rose to the defense of the Whig party's national reputation in face of Democratic party allegations, apparently false, that recent riots in Philadelphia had been the Whigs' fault, as the Whigs were said to have been against foreigners and Catholics. • • • 1847: Lived in Pekin, IL, apparently only for a short time. • • • 1847, December 15: Henry wrote to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, stating he lived in Pekin, Illinois and stating that on June 1846 he furnished supplies, transportation, etc. to Captain Edward Jones' company of volunteers before they were mustered into the service of the United States. He asked that the unpaid balance of the claim be allowed. • • • 1848: In the presidential campaign of 1848, Dr. Henry served as a member of the Whig State Central Committee.[2] Henry and Abraham Lincoln toured Illinois on behalf of the candidacy of General Taylor for president. They addressed Whig meetings in Pekin, Peoria, and elsewhere. • • • 1849, March 8: Lincoln recommended to John M. Clayton, secretary of state in Washington, D.C., that Dr. Henry, of Springfield, be appointed as register of the land office for the Territory of Minnesota. Subsequently, Lincoln wrote to others to encourage Henry's appointment. • • • 1849, November 25: Lincoln wrote to Clayton a letter of introduction: "Allow me to introduce our friend, Dr. A.G. Henry of this place [Springfield]. I solicited for him your kindness and confidence; and this I do, not ceremoniously merely, but in all sincerity. You may perhaps remember his name, as that of the first person on whose behalf I made an appeal to you immediately after the inauguration of General Taylor." At a later time he was appointed as a physician to Indians in the Grande Ronde Reserve in eastern Oregon, at a salary of $2,000 per year. • • • 1852: Dr. Henry became a farmer in Yamhill County, Oregon, and around the same time was well known as a surveyor, later serving as surveyor general of the same state. • • • 1860, July 4: Abraham Lincoln wrote from Springfield to Dr. Henry, who was in Oregon: "Your very agreeable letter of May 15 was received three days ago. We are just now receiving the first sprinkling of your Oregon election returns--not enough, I think, to indicate the result. We should be happy if both Logan and Baker should triumph [Edward D. Baker was candidate for the U.S. Senate and David Logan, son of Steven T. Logan, was a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives]. Long before this you have learned who was nominated at Chicago.[3] We do not know what a day may bring forth; but, today, it looks as if the Chicago ticket will be elected. I think the chances were more than equal that we should have beaten the Democracy united... Our boy [William Wallace Lincoln], in his tenth year (the baby when you left), has just had a hard and tedious spell of scarlet fever--and he is not yet beyond all danger. I have a headache and a sore throat upon me now, inducing me to suspect that I have an inferior type of the same thing. Our eldest boy, Bob, has been away from us nearly a year at school, and will enter Harvard University this month. He promises very well, considering we never controlled him much. Write again when you receive this. Mary joins in sending our kindest regards to Mrs. H and yourself, and all the family. Your friend, as ever, A. Lincoln." • • • 1860, September 22: Lincoln wrote from Springfield to Anson Henry stating that "all looks very favorable to our success" in the forthcoming presidential election in November. Then, "make my best respects to Mrs. H. and the rest of your family. Your friend, as ever, A. Lincoln." • • • 1863, February to May: For much of this time Dr. Henry was Abraham Lincoln's guest at the White House. • • • 1863, April: President Lincoln, Mary Todd Lincoln, son Tad, Attorney General Bates, Noah Brooks (a friend from Springfield, IL, days), and Dr. Henry took a cruise on the Potomac River on a small unarmed steamer, the *Carrie Martin,* departing from the Navy Yard in Washington. It began to snow, and the steamer pulled into a cove for the night near a place called Indian Head. Later, the same party visited Gen. Hooker and his Union troops, traveling by train. • • • 1863, May: Henry visited New York City and stayed at the Metropolitan Hotel. • 1864, November 9: Abraham Lincoln wrote to Henry stating that his reelection was considered certain, and, considering his opponent, "It is not certain that McClellan has carried any state, though the chances are that he has carried New Jersey and Kentucky." At the time news traveled slowly. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Gov. A.G. Henry was formerly United States Surveyor General [for the Washington Territory], and had been recently appointed Governor of Washington Territory. He was a dear friend of the Lincoln family, and it was in his house that Mr. Lincoln married his wife [Mary Todd in 1842].[4] He was about 55 years of age, and a man of noble character."

[1] *Sangamo Journal*, August 12, 1837; spelled *Sangamon* by some historians, *Sangamo* by Carl Sandburg.

[2] Harry E. Pratt (editor), "22 Letters of David Logan, Pioneer Oregon Lawyer," *Oregon Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 44, 1943.

[3] The Republican Party met in convention in Chicago on May 16, 1860. The two leading contenders were long-time New York politician, Sen. William H. Seward, and Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Lincoln won on the second ballot. Sen. Hannibal Hamlin of Maine was selected as his running mate.

[4] In fact, Lincoln and Mary Todd were married in the Springfield, Illinois, home of Ninian W. Edwards, not Henry's home.

• • • *Oregon Statesman* August 21, 1865: "Dr. A.G. Henry, Surveyor General of Washington Territory...was well known on the Pacific coast. Dr. Henry passed the last winter at Washington, and was on his way home when the casualty occurred that cost him his life. In early life he resided in Illinois and there made the acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln; that acquaintance ripened into a friendship that continued uninterrupted until death. But few men exercised greater influences with the late president than Dr. A.G. Henry, and this influence was uniformly exerted in favor of the Pacific coast. Had President Lincoln lived, Dr. Henry would have been assigned to one of the bureaus at Washington–that of Indian Affairs–in which he would have been vastly useful to our people. The death of the president destroyed the Dr.'s chances for preferment, and he was on his way back to resume his duties in Washington Territory when death overtook him. As showing the relations that existed between our friend and the late president, we state the fact that during our stay at Washington last winter, we scarcely ever saw the president that he was not in company with Dr. Henry. On one occasion, when the president and Cabinet appeared in the Senate officially, the president walked down the long aisle of the Senate, arm in-arm with Dr. H., followed by Secretary Seward and the remaining members of the Cabinet. When seated, his position was next to the president. On the day when the votes were counted in the House of Representatives, for president and vice president of the United States, Mrs. Lincoln turned out in state; and was escorted to the seat in the Ambassador's Gallery by the unobtrusive gentleman who hailed from Washington Territory. On that occasion Mrs. L was the 'observed of all observers,' and numerous were the inquiries as to the name and standing of the gentleman who acted as her escort. These things in themselves have but little importance, but now that an old friend "sleeps the sleep that knows no waking," we name them as showing the regard in which he was held by the President."

Hunsacker, James C. • • • Lost. • • • Hunsacker was the former sheriff of Contra Costa County, California.[1] • • • *Alta California,* September 16, 1865: Noted that as a tribute to their late fellow members, Messrs. DeWolf and Hunsacker, a resolution had been passed to honor them.

Indian No. 1, name unknown • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Lost.

Indian No. 2, name unknown • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Lost.

Ingram [or Ingraham], A., M.D., U.S. Army • • • Lost. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Dr. A Ingram is a surgeon in the regular Army, and was attached to the 2d United States Dragoons in the Army of the Potomac. He was in every battle of the Grand Army up to the fight at Gettysburg, about which time he was ordered to this coast, and has recently been transferred to the Department of Oregon."

Irwin, John • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Body recovered.[2] • • • *Alta California,* August 25, 1865, from a letter dated August 17: "I was witness to the finding of a body...on the 15th instant, near Chetco, a few miles above the boundary line.... In his pocket we found...two small papers, much worn, and torn. We also took from his finger a gold ring with the device of a double-heart, and inside of it was engraved the name 'Irwin. One of the papers was an inventory of men and women's clothing.... The only name on the list was one cloak, Catharine Irwin.... The other papers were folded in with other and were torn on the side and bottom; perfect on the top, and contained the annexed writing: 'John B. Ferguson, Southeast corner of Howard and Thompson streets, Philadelphia, Co., John Irwin.'"

Jennings, James W. • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Lost. • • • An account of Jennings in the *Alta California,* July 28, 1865, the day the ship set sail, is quoted in Chapter 12. • • • *Alta California,* August 4, 1865:[3] "'Crazy Jennings,' the newsboy, a well known character of San Francisco in past times, whose arrival from the East was noticed in the *Alta* a few days since, was another of the victims."

Jerimiah family member No. 1 • • • Lost. • • • Historian Don Marshall, in "The Wreck of the Brother Jonathan," *Oregon Coast,* November - December 1993, commented that Sam Luckey's wife and children would be sorely missed in Eugene Oregon, as would the Jerimiah family whom they were escorting. Otherwise the Jerimiah family is not known to the present writer. The term "family' would seem to indicate three or more persons.

Jerimiah family member No. 2 • • • Lost.

Jerimiah family member No. 3 • • • Lost.

Keenan, Rosanna Hughes (Mrs. John C.) • • • Lost. • • • Of all of the passengers aboard the ill-fated *S.S. Brother Jonathan,* Rosanna Hughes Keenan more than anyone else seems to have captured the imagination of later writers. The husband of Mrs. Keenan was said to be a saloonkeeper in Victoria, B.C., and certainly he had been a saloonkeeper in California earlier. Accompanying her on the northward journey were seven women, who were not listed separately in the ship's register. One of these is believed to have been young Martha E. Wilder, one of just two ladies from the Keenan group who survived, the other being Mrs. Martha Stott. This would leave five other women whose names are not known (see listing below). • • • In the mid-1850s, John C. Keenan operated the Fashion, in Sacramento at 39 J. Street, a well-known saloon, restaurant, and place of entertainment in that inland city.[4] Langley's 1864-5 *San Francisco Directory* listed no Keenan enterprise in that city, but the 1865-6 issue noted that John Keenan (and presumably Mrs. also) operated a "liquor saloon" at the southwest corner of First and Stevenson streets. At the same time they managed the Oriental Hotel and its restaurant at the southwest corner of Bush and Battery streets, having recently acquired it from S. McCullough & Co. • • • *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest,* 1895, p. 133, included a list of passengers of the *Brother Jonathan* which contained this entry: "Mrs. John C. Keenan, seven courtesans." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865: "The reader will notice a discrepancy between the statements in both dispatches [quoted previously in the *Bulletin*] and the list of names given in Petterson's [Patterson's] dispatch. According to the "list" there were 11 men, 4 women and 2 children in boat that came ashore, while one dispatch states that there were '17 adults and 3 children,' and the other that there were 14 men, a woman and a child. None of the names of these four women is to be found registered at the office of the company in this city, and the explanation given is that they probably belonged to the party of seven women printed on the lists as an appendage to the name of Mrs. John C. Keenan. Mrs. Keenan was the keeper of a lager beer saloon at Victoria, and the seven women under her charge were on their way thither as waiting girls." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865: "Three of the women who were saved,[5] and who were mentioned in the passengers list as being with Mrs. J.C. Keenan, are on board the *Del Norte,* and will return to your city, also the third officer, Mr. Patterson, and all the rest who were saved from the *Jonathan*." • • • *Alta California,* August 10, 1865: "Mrs. Stott, says that she had been somewhat sick on Sunday morning and remained upon the hurricane

[1] *Sacramento Daily Bee,* August 4, 1865.

[2] *Alta California* August 25, 1865. His body is believed to have been recovered, but, apparently, *positive* identification was not made.

[3] On the same day the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* commented: "James W. Jennings, commonly known as 'Crazy Jennings,' the newsboy, is also ascertained to have been on board the steamer."

[4] *Samuel Colville's Sacramento Directory 1853-18554,* p. 98 (full-page advertisement).

[5] This differs from other accounts that only one lady from Mrs. Keenan's party survived.

deck, in company with her son and a girl named Elizabeth Wild,[1] who was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan. When the vessel struck she noticed that everything about the deck appeared to be loose and the whole vessel apparently shattered. A moment after planks came up alongside from the steamer's bottom. She got into the small boat as soon as possible with her son and the girl Wild. After they got clear of the vessel Mrs. Stott saw Mrs. Keenan, who had been sick in her berth all the morning, struggling in the water. She was partially dressed and had two life preservers tied on her. One of the women in the boat afterwards said that Mrs. Keenan was hit on the head and stunned by a plank or one of the boats." ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865: "Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and her son Paul, who were among the saved, were in no way connected with the party of Mrs. Keenan. Mrs. B is a German lady of respectable family and was on her way to Victoria to join some relatives living in the British Possession."[2] ••• *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 11, 1865 (from statement of survivor Mrs. Martha Stott, this being slightly different from the Stott recollection quoted earlier; Mrs. Stott was in the employ of Mrs. Keenan's husband, John): "She [Mrs. Stott] states that one of the boats lowered contained women, all of whom disappeared instantaneously, with the exception of Mrs. Keenan, the person to whom she was engaged, who succeeded in getting on the bottom of it. She had nothing on but her night dress, and clung desperately to the boat as it heaved to and fro, until the ship, listing, struck her on the head, when, throwing up her hands wildly, she sank. It is stated that she had seven thousand dollars' worth of diamonds with her." ••• *Sacramento Union*, August 29, 1865: "Probate—In the matter of the estate of Rosanna H. Keenan, deceased, the petition of J.C. Keenan for letters of administration was yesterday dismissed and the will of deceased filed and set for hearing September 11th. Subpoenas ordered to issue to George Wilkes Keenan and Pat Hughes." • The estate of Rosanna H. Keenan was processed by the Probate Court of Sacramento. The findings noted, in part: "Whereas Rosanna H. Keenan died on or about the last [blank] should be 30th day of July 1865 leaving real estate in the Counties of Sacramento and San Francisco and a Will disposing of the same, and whereas on the 11th day of Sept. 1865, John C. Keenan was appointed Executor of said will...." Mrs. Keenan provided for legacies of $2,000. The appraised value of her estate was $[illegible] and monthly rental income was $[illegible]. Under a provision of the will, husband John Keenan was to become the sole owner of a house and lot, No. [illegible] on [illegible] Street, San Francisco. Mrs. Keenan had been the guardian of George P. Keenan, a minor. Under provisions of Mrs. Keenan's will, John Keenan became guardian after her decease. John C. Keenan petitioned to obtain cash from her estate to pay for repairs to a saloon, but there were insufficient funds as Mrs. Keenan's property consisted mainly of real estate.[3] • Historical note: In 1863 in the *Sacramento Directory*, John C. Keenan was listed as proprietor of the Fashion Exchange, at 41 J Street and as operator of the Bank Exchange at [illegible] K Street, corner of 2nd Street. He resided at the rear of the Fashion Exchange. By 1865, the Fashion may have been known as Keenan's Saloon, situated on lot 5 of the block bounded by J and K streets and 2nd and 3rd streets.

Lady No. 3 accompanying Mrs. Keenan, name unknown ••• Lost. ••• Seven ladies were accompanying Mrs. Keenan. Martha E. Wilder and Mrs. Martha Stott survived; the names of nos. 3 through 7 are not known.

Lady No. 4 accompanying Mrs. Keenan, name unknown ••• Lost.

Lady No. 5 accompanying Mrs. Keenan, name unknown ••• Lost.

Lady No. 6 accompanying Mrs. Keenan, name unknown ••• Lost.

Lady No. 7 accompanying Mrs. Keenan, name unknown ••• Lost.

Lanarty, William ••• Bought ticket after boarding ship.[4] ••• Lost. ••• *Alta California*, August 6, 1865: "Among the passengers on the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* who did not buy tickets until after going on board, and whose names were therefore omitted from the list heretofore published, were Wm. Lanarty, clerk of Mundrow, Bray & Co., Victoria, V.I., who leaves a wife in this city [other passengers were also listed]."

Leach, Mr. ••• Orderly to General Wright. ••• Body recovered.[5] ••• *Alta California*, August 15, 1865, from a dispatch of August 10, reported by J.G. Knower: "Today at this place, from eight to 10 miles distant, the following bodies have been picked up by boatmen; Leach (General Wright's orderly), E.J. Lount, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish; a woman, name unknown...." ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine."

Lee, Mrs. Henry Charles ••• Lost. ••• In 1864 her husband, Henry C. Lee, was listed as an "equestrian manager." He lived on the west side of Mission Street between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets.[6] ••• *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1865 (excerpt from a correspondent's trip from Eureka to Gold Bluff to patrol the beach for bodies): "While patrolling the beach today we found a camel, which was one of the two which belonged to H.C. Lee, the circus manager, who is now in Oregon awaiting the arrival of his wife and child, with the two camels and one horse.[7] She and the child have surely perished. One of the persons who was saved in the third mate's boat had the child of Mrs. Lee in her arms a few minutes before the *Jonathan* struck." ••• *The H.C. Lee Circus*. The following information relates to H.C. Lee and his circus activities:[8] As is true of many other circus troupes and performers, Lee played in many venues and under many different names. ••• Henry Charles Lee, born in England in 1815, came to America with his family and circus troupe, six people in all, in 1848. His first engagement may have been with the New Broadway Circus at the Alhambra Theatre, New York City, in that year, continuing in 1849. Meanwhile, in November 1848 he made an appearance with Welch, Delavan & Nathan's National Circus when they visited Pittsburgh on tour. The performers included Lee, his wife Margaret (who subsequently died in 1852), brother Lavater Lee, relative Charles C. Lee, and two

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1 Actually, Martha E. Wilder.

2 The implication is that the "party of Mrs. Keenan" was less than "respectable."

3 Information is from *Probate Court Records Sacramento County*, Volume L, 1866-1868.

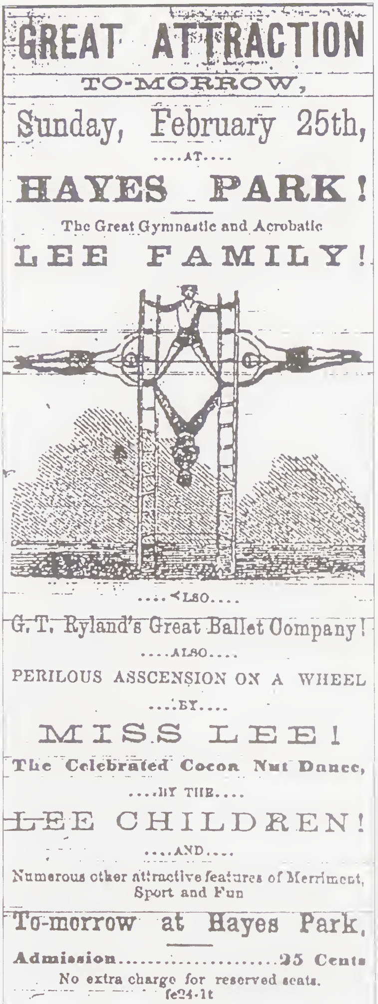
4 *Alta California*, August 6, 1865.

5 Body No. 1 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865.

6 Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 245.

7 An account of years later in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894, casts doubt on the identity of the "wife and child" described as being from the H.C. Lee family, if Lee was not aboard the ship. Mrs. Tweedale a survivor of the wreck said that a Chinese woman and her child got into her lifeboat while the woman's husband remained on board begging to get in.

8 Information is primarily from an extensive file on Lee provided by the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI. Included were newspaper clippings, advertisements, and much biographical information. Also provided were entries from Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus*, Vol. III, 1992. From the Thayer text pp. 25-26 (Welch, Delavan & Nathan); pp. 69-70 (Lee & Marshall); and pp. 99-100 (H.C. Lee) were particularly valuable. Information from the proofs of the forthcoming work by William L. Slout, *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle*, was furnished by the Circus World Museum and included much data. Col. C.G. Sturtevant, "The Circus in San Francisco," *The White Tops*, November-December 1952 included information.


GREAT ATTRACTION

TO-MORROW,

Sunday, February 25th,

....AT....

HAYES PARK!

The Great Gymnastic and Acrobatic

LEE FAMILY!

....ALSO....

G. T. Ryland's Great Ballet Company!

....ALSO....

PERILOUS ASSCENSION ON A WHEEL

....BY....

MISS LEE!

The Celebrated Cocoa Nut Dance,

....BY THE....

LEE CHILDREN!

....AND....

Numerous other attractive features of Merriment, Sport and Fun

To-morrow at Hayes Park,

Admission..........................25 Cents

No extra charge for reserved seats.

fe24-1t

After the passing of Mrs. Lee and her child, the other Lee children remained in show business. This advertisement for the Lee Family gymnasts and acrobats was published in the *San Francisco Daily Dramatic Chronicle*, February 24, 1866.

apprentices, Eugene (a son) and Theodore. At the time they introduced into America what became known as the "perch act," or, in French, *la perche*, whereby one performer held the base of a long pole while an acrobat climbed up and performed acts at the top. Lavater Lee balanced the base of the pole on his forehead, a stunning attraction for the audience. • • • In the winter of 1848-1849 Lee and his fellow performers were seen in Philadelphia. The Welch, Delavan & Nathan company continued until 1850, when one partner withdrew and the circus became known as Welch & Nathan's. After the 1849 engagement H.C. Lee joined Welch & Mann for a trip with various stops in the West Indies. • • • In 1851, Lee and his family moved to California. Making the trip were Lee, wife Margaret, sons Francis and Eugene, and a comic dancer and banjoist, John R. Marshall. Arriving early in the year, Lee and his troupe had neither horses nor tents, but their talents in gymnastics and acrobatics were considerable. He leased the American Theatre in San Francisco and set up an equestrian-based show that was very popular with the public.[1] The earliest located San Francisco newspaper account is dated June 3, 1851, in which the troupe is billed as Lee & Marshall. Leaving the city on tour, the outfit, also known as the H.E. Lee Show, played in theatres and halls in other areas of California, including south in Los Angeles, with success. • • • By March 1852, Lee and his troupe advertised as the National Circus with headquarters on Pine Street, San Francisco. On the bill were the regular performers plus Charles DeVere, an accomplished clown. The Lee company spent much of the spring in the foothills of the Sierras playing at such places as Downieville, Sacramento, and Marysville, these being among the larger inland towns. Their trip to the hinterlands was a success, and they returned to the city with sufficient funds to buy more equipment and add to their staff. Sacramento proved to be a popular venue with its large population, and Lee & Marshall's National Circus played there on [illegible] occasions from 1853 to 1856. Flushed with success from their trip to the gold fields, Lee & Marshall made additional inland tours, stopping at Columbia and the larger Marysville, San Jose, and Stockton. Standard admission was $2 per person. Audiences were generally small, but sufficient to earn a bottom line profit. • • • In 1853 clown [illegible] and his wife, tightrope walker [illegible] a.k.a. [illegible], signed on with Lee & Marshall. [illegible] proved to be a popular headliner in the mining camps and was widely featured in advertisements. On October 17, 1855, Lee & Marshall's National Circus played in San Francisco. Another engagement in the city began on May 7, 1856, and continued until the 15th. Subsequently, many members of the circus company sailed to the Sandwich Islands, [illegible]. After Lee & Marshall returned to California they made a tour of the [illegible]. Joining them were George Peoples, [illegible] Hinkley [illegible] first season in the circus in *la perche*, clown Sam [illegible], and [illegible] from the East: Frank Whittaker and his wife, Mary Ann Wells. After the season, Marshall left the partnership to join Rowe's Olympic Circus. H.C. Lee found a new partner, a man who had set up in Calaveras County in December 1856 as Bennett's North American Circus, and formed Lee & Bennett's Great North American Circus. The new outfit offered 25 performers and was the largest circus to play in California up to that time. On the bill were a number of performers who had

[1] *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 354, noted that the American Theatre opened on October 20, 1851 [illegible] Sansome Street between California and Sacramento [illegible] could contain nearly 2,000 persons [illegible] Mrs. Stark gave the opening address. [illegible] opening night, when the house was densely crowded. [illegible] and the sand which made the artificial foundation [illegible] considerable fears were entertained [illegible] for the safety of the structure. [illegible] the sinking of the walls was regular, and after the first night, no [illegible] change was perceptible."

[2] [illegible] DeVere's real name was Charles Hinckley. [illegible] years of experience.

recently come to California. As constituted with acts new and old, the lineup included Frank Whittaker, Mary Ann Wells, George Ryland, William Worrell and his three daughters, Dan Conover, Hiram Franklin, and James Melville. The last-named was the star of the show and went on to great fame in his own right. The equipage included wagons from Abbott & Downing of Concord, NH (makers of the famed Concord Coaches employed by Wells, Fargo and others in overland routes), and an ornate bandwagon from Fielding Brothers in New York. • • • Times were difficult, and the year 1857 saw the end not only of Lee & Bennett's Circus, but also of J.A. Rowe's Olympic Circus, as creditors attached their assets. With great determination, Lee formed another, smaller troupe, H.C. Lee's Circus. He headed northward and for a time played to audiences in small towns in Oregon in 1859. In the same year an engagement in Los Angeles was billed as Circo Nacional de Lee y Hippodrome, obviously intended for Spanish-speaking audiences. Later in the year, Bennett rejoined Lee, the two purchased a small schooner, and the company including several acrobats went to the Sandwich Islands, Tahiti, and South America, staying away for two years. On July 28, 1860, a son, Thomas Lavater Lee, was born to Lee and the second Mrs. Lee, in Valparaiso, Chile. • • • In 1862 a daughter, Rosa Lee, was born in Sacramento.[1] Lee seems to have remained quiet in the circus world until 1863, when he again advertised in the United States included under the name of Lee, Worrell & Sebastian. • • • From October 23 to November 26, 1863, the Mammoth Circus & Roman Hippodrome, John Wilson and H.C. Lee, proprietors, and J.A. Alexander, agent, appeared under canvas on a lot on Jackson Street, San Francisco. • • • From May 19 to June 3, 1864, John Wilson featured in a troupe playing the same Jackson Street lot, billed as Wilson, Zoyares Great Circus—without mention of H.C. Lee or his family. However, the seemingly related Wilson-Zoyares & Carlos Great Circus played the same venue from September 2 to October 9, with the bill including the Lee Family, acrobats and riders. On September 16, 1864, the circus exhibited two camels which attracted wide attention. Although camels had been shown in the city before, apparently they were still somewhat of a novelty. At the Mechanics Pavilion the Grand Roman Hippodrome & Mammoth Circus entertained the public from December 26, 1864, to February 12, 1865, and featured Lee & Ryland acrobats and tumblers. • • • In 1865 G.F. Ryland became a partner. • • • Among members of the Lee family listed in circus bills in the 1850s and 1860s were (1850s) Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Lee, Master Francis Lee, Master Eugene Lee, Frank Lee, Madame Lee (equestrienne and rope walker), Mrs. Jeannette Lee (equestrienne). • • • In 1865-1866 Ella Lee and Polly Lee were listed as equestriennes. • • • Many months after the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* tragedy of July 30, 1865, in February 1866 "The Great Gymnastic and Acrobatic LEE FAMILY!" was a featured attraction at Hayes Park, San Francisco. An advertisement included this: "Also G.T. Ryland's Great Ballet Company! Also Perilous Ascension on a Wheel by MISS LEE! The Celebrated Cocoa Nut Dance by the LEE CHILDREN! Numerous other attractive features of Merriment, Sport and Fun.... Admission 25 Cents. No extra charge for reserved seats." • • • This was part of an advertisement in April 1866: "Great Balloon Ascension! And splendid performance by the great LEE FAMILY! and George Ryland.... Charles Alpers's Metropolitan Band will accompany the performance. Admission 25 Cents." From May 3 to 30 in the same year, the Lee Family did equestrian and acrobatic acts under canvas on Jackson Street. • • • Further in 1866, the outfit was advertised as the Great Cosmopolitan Circus Troupe, Lee & Ryland, managers. • • • The third (at least) Mrs. Lee died overseas in Rangoon, British Burma, in the 1870s giving birth to a son. At the time she was with Chiarini's Circus. • • • In later efforts H.C. Lee toured as Lee, Worrell & Sebastian and as Lee & Wilson. His last effort was in 1877 when he and George W. DeHaven endeavored to re-launch the defunct Great Eastern Circus. Lee died on September 17, 1885. His obituary was carried in the *New York Clipper*, November 21 of the same year.

Lee, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Lee • • • Lost.

Leffer, P. • • • Lost.

Logan, Izza Chrisman (Mrs. William) • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California*, August 4, 1865: "Mr. H. [*sic*, W. is correct] Logan and wife, who were among the passengers, are well known to many persons on this coast...." Mrs. Logan had gone to San Francisco to seek medical treatment for an illness of several months' duration.

Logan, William • • • Superintendent of the U.S. Mint at The Dalles, Oregon. • • • Lost. • • • Logan, who worked with the Indian Department in Oregon, had with him $15,000 in Legal Tender notes in a special leather money belt on his person; the money was never reported as being found. • • • *Alta California*, August 4, 1865: "Among the lost by the *Brother Jonathan*... Mr. H. [*sic*; W. was intended] Logan and wife, who were among the passengers, are well known to many persons on this coast. Mr. Logan was an old resident of Oregon, and was recently appointed Superintendent of the Mint at The Dalles. He was also connected with the Indian Department, and carried with him on the steamer a large amount of Government supplies." • • • *Oregon Statesman* September 4, 1865, quoting an account from The Dalles: "The wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, and with the vessel the loss of so many valuable lives, had a chilling effect upon our whole community.... The people of The Dalles feel that they have a special cause for mourning in the death of one of their truest and best citizens.... This, in a pre-eminent degree, was the position occupied by our deceased friend William Logan.... Of our departed friend's early history we know but little. He was a native of Missouri, but at an early age emigrated to Oregon and settled in Yamhill County. Subsequently he removed to The Dalles, and for the last seven years has well sustained the character of a leading citizen. Liberal to a fault, his purse was ever open to relieve the necessities of the unfortunate.... His wife shares with him a watery grave, and only one child—a promising son—remains to mourn the death of a kind and affectionate father...." • • • *Biographical notes:*[4] 1826: William Logan was born in February 1826 in Montgomery County, Missouri. Surviving documents and letters in his hand show numerous errors and indicate that his formal education must have been slight. • • • 1846: He came to the Pacific Northwest via the Oregon Trail. Among his friends in Missouri was John R. McBride, who also came to Oregon in 1846, but whether he accompanied Logan is not known.[5] Logan and McBride both settled in Yamhill County, where, coincidentally, Anson G. Henry (see separate listing) made his home after coming to the region. • • • 1847: Logan must have been very industrious, for in this year he contracted to supply 18,000 fence rails of cedar for rancher A.L. Alderman, obviously employing equipment and assistants. • • • 1848: On April 4, William Logan filed claim for 320 acres of land on the east bank of the Willamette River about 12 miles north of the Yamhill River. In the same year the *Oregon Spectator* carried this announcement: "Married by Elder G.O. Burnett,[6] December 26, 1848, Mr.

[1] Rosa Lee, later known as Rosa Lee Hanley, died in Los Angeles, CA, May 21, 1952. She was trained by her father to be a bareback horse rider and retired from the ring in 1917 (cf. *The Billboard*, June 7, 1952, p. 49).

[2] Advertisements in the *San Francisco Daily Chronicle*, February 24, 1866; April 7, 1866.

[3] Cf. *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1881, p. 306.

[4] Primarily adapted from Dudley L. McClure, "Dalles City: The U.S. Mint that Never Struck a Coin," *Coins* magazine, April and June 1980.

[5] McBride went on to become one of Oregon's best-known citizens, was elected to the territorial Senate in 1856, was a member of the Oregon Constitutional Convention in 1857, and in 1860 worked in Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign.

[6] Glen O. Burnett was the brother of Peter H. Burnett, chief justice of the provisional government in Oregon Territory, who later became the first American governor of California (his *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* is cited in the Bibliography).

William Logan to Issy [actually, Izza] Chrisman.[1] On March 7, 1850, the couple had a son, Hugh, who years later as Dr. Hugh Logan became well known in the state. • • • 1849: When the Oregon Exchange Company was formed to mint gold coins of $5 and $10 value, William Logan was acquainted with one of the principals, William H. Rector, under whom he later worked for a time as an Indian agent. In the same year Logan was named as judge of elections in the southern precinct of Yamhill County, a reflection of the esteem in which he was held. He was a member of the Whig party, which nationally was in the distinct minority to the well-entrenched Democrats. • • • 1856: Along with many other Whigs, Logan became a Republican and was active in the presidential campaign of this year. Around this time and in the ensuing decade, he assisted with the administration of many estates in Oregon. In the same year he purchased property at The Dalles on the Columbia River. His wife's family, the Chrismans, subsequently moved to the town. Logan became active in business, and became a partner in W.C. Moody & Co., a freight forwarding and commission firm. • • • 1860: Logan was active in the Republican party's election campaign for Abraham Lincoln.[2] In November, Lincoln carried the state. • • • 1861: On July 13, President Abraham Lincoln named Logan as an Indian agent for Oregon, serving the Warm Springs tribe. His surety or performance bond in the amount of $25,000, was signed by H.P. Isaacs, O.S. Savage, and W.C. Moody, the last two of whom were associated with Logan in business. His salary was $1,500 per year. Many problems developed, including the discovery of gold in the reservation area (which caused much conflict between Indians and white men), the depreciated value of Legal Tender notes given to the Indians (it was not easy for them to understand why they could only be spent at a deep discount), and more. However, Logan acquitted himself admirably, considering the circumstances.[3] In August 1861 Logan advertised under the style of William Logan & Co., a new firm that operated a "first class market.... [with] the best quality of mutton, beef, and pork which they will sell cheaper than any other market in The Dalles." He also continued his work in the administration of estates, was active in real estate, and was prominent in civic affairs. • • • 1864: The Oregon delegation to Congress recommended that William Logan be named as superintendent of The Dalles Mint. • 1865: Logan's appointment was made. In the spring of the same year, Logan obtained leave from his post in the Indian Department to go to San Francisco to obtain medical care for his wife, who had been sick for three months. On June 17, 1865, Mr. and Mrs. Logan and their 15-year-old son Hugh registered at a local hotel, the Russ House. Mr. and Mrs. Logan perished aboard the *S.S. Brother Jonathan* on July 30, 1865. Seemingly, son Hugh was not aboard. • • • On September 26, Henry W. Corbett was recommended to succeed Logan as superintendent of The Dalles Mint. A later superintendent was Quincy Brooks. • • • *More about The Dalles Mint:* It is likely that in July 1865, Superintendent William Logan intended to lay groundwork for the project. Building, equipping, and finding personnel for a mint was a very complex procedure and typically took years to complete after congressional approval. In 1869, work on the mint building commenced on a block bounded by Madison (to the west), Second (north), Monroe (east), and Third (south) streets. The building, with a footprint of about 50 by 60 feet and standing 35 feet high, was faced with stone brought from Mill Creek five miles distant. There were two full working floors, a small attic storage space, and a tall cupola on top. Fate was not kind, and in 1871 the structure, still being worked on, was ravaged by fire. The mess was cleaned up, and work resumed. One account stated the final cost of the building as $110,000.[4] However, it was soon realized that the boom times of the 1860s had ended, and local hills and valleys were yielding less precious metal than before. In 1875 the site and structure were deeded by the federal government as a gift to the state of Oregon. In 1878 it was proposed that the stone in The Dalles Mint be removed and sold for use in the construction of locks in the Cascades on the Columbia River, but the measure did not pass.[5] In 1889 the building, which had been vacant in the meantime, was purchased by local investors. From that date, and continuing for over a half century, the Diamond Milling Company housed its boilers there. Apparently, the impressive building attracted many tourists, perhaps attracted by signs stating "what might have been." Locals were fond of saying, in effect, "There's our mint!"[6] In 1943 the structure was extensively damaged by fire, after which it was derelict until it was rebuilt in 1947. Beginning in 1959 it was owned by Ralph's Transfer & Storage Co. By this time it had been cut down to just one story, with no indication of its former glory remaining.

Logan, William, servant or valet of • • • Lost. • • • Mrs. Logan, who had been very ill early in the year, had gone to San Francisco to seek medical treatment. Perhaps the "servant" or "valet" was assisting with her journey, although it was reported that her medical care in California proved to be successful.

Lonate [or Lount or Lenate; or E. Ilonate], E.J. [or E.L.] • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Body recovered.[7] • • • Accounts include these spellings, which may represent just one person: Body of E.J. Lount recovered.[8] Body of E.J. Lonate recovered.[9] Body of E.L. Lonate or Lenate recovered.[10] E. Ilonate.[11] • • • *Alta California*, August 14, 1865 (excerpt from letter from Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City, August 9): "The body of George W. Pollock was brought ashore today; also, E.J. Lonate and the body of a soldier, unknown, supposed to be a sergeant in the United States service...." • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865, from a Crescent City dispatch dated August 10 from J.G. Knower: "Today at this place, from eight to 10 miles distant, the following bodies have been picked up by boatmen; Leach (General Wright's orderly), E.J. Lount, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish; a woman, name unknown...." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall, of the firm of Dugan & Wall): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine."

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[1] Izza Chrisman was born in Virginia in 1828. She came to Oregon overland with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Campbell Ewing Chrisman.

[2] William Logan was not related to Oregon resident David Logan, a prominent Republican and friend of Lincoln, son of one of Lincoln's lawyer associates in Springfield, Illinois.

[3] Dudley McClure gives many details of the Indian assignment, the excellent work that Logan did, and the problems he faced.

[4] Joe D. Thompson, "Old U.S. Mint at The Dalles a Monument to Bygone Era," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 41, 1940, gives this description: "The old mint, which stands in the center of a full city block of The Dalles, remains a material reminder of the era. Its granite walls are almost hidden in a hodgepodge of frame or concrete structures built to meet industrial exigencies of later years. Its historic significance, however, keeps it in the limelight of community interest, and during the summer [illegible] men and women may be seen poking around its walls, which have gathered mold and dust and which show the [illegible] of the years. Sometimes the visitors climb to the roofs of adjoining structures to secure a [illegible] candid camera view."

[5] *Journal of the House of Representatives* (reprint of the Oregon House of Representatives, Salem, OR, October 12, 1878).

[6] Anecdote in Herman Oliver, *Gold and Cattle Country*.

[7] Body No. 2, listed as E.L. Lonate, in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865.

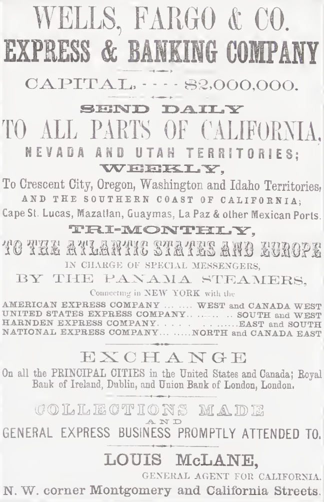
[8] *Alta California*, August 15, 1865.

[9] *Alta California*, August 14, 1865.

[10] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 16, 1865; *Alta California*, August 17, 1865.

[11] *The Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865.

Joseph A. Lord of Wells, Fargo & Co. kept an eye on the company's shipment to the north on the *S.S. Brother Jonathan*, July 1865. The advertisement at right, from the same era, solicits business to Crescent City and other points to the north including Oregon. (Above photo from the San Francisco Maritime Museum National Historical Park, Chase Collection; advertisement from Langley's *San Francisco Directory, 1864-5*)



Lord, Joseph A. • • • Messenger for Wells Fargo Express. • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 Lord was listed as "northern coast messenger, Wells Fargo & Co."[1] He lived at the corner of Folsom Street and Harrison Avenue. • • • Captain DeWolf, General George Wright, Joseph A. Lord and [illegible] Nisbet were seen standing on the deck of the sinking ship by Quartermaster Jacob Yates as the wooden surf boat carrying Yates and other survivors pulled away to safety.[2] • • • *Alta California*, August 3, 1865: "Joseph A. Lord, brother of Charles Lord, of the firm of Nudd, Lord & Co., supposed to have been lost in the *Brother Jonathan*, was 36 years of age, and a native of Woodstock, Vermont. [illegible] He has been an express messenger for Messrs. Wells, Fargo & Co., on the northern coast, since 1858." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 3, 1865, added that "This was the first trip he had made to Oregon during the last six months—the messenger who had been running on that route having changed off on the last trip. We are informed that Mr. Lord was insured in the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, for $[illegible]." • • • *Sacramento Bee* August 3, 1865: "Mr. Lord was a resident of Sacramento in the olden time, and in 1851 was in the employ of Joseph Haines on K Street, between Second and Third. After this, he was a partner in the firm of Lord & Mitchell, grocers on Second Street, between K and L. After the big fire of 1852 he was one of the 13 who took active part in the reorganization of Engine Co. No. 3 of which he was foreman. In 1855 Mr. Lord left Sacramento and went into business in Crescent City. He did not remain there a great while, but accepted a position in the employ of Wells, Fargo & Co... Mr. Lord is 34 years of age. He was born in Brattleboro, Vermont...." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865, included a report from an unnamed survivor: "The Chief Engineer, Mr. Mott; the purser, Mr. Benton, and J.A. Lord, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messenger, were seen standing in the purser's room door, when some of those who were saved came aft to get in the boat." The same edition reported that one of J.A. Lord's relatives, not identified by first name, had traveled to Crescent City: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half-past 2 o'clock today. Among the passengers of the *Del Norte*, are Colonel Wright, Captain Pollock, Mr. Lord, and others who went up for the purpose of endeavoring to recover the bodies, or learn some tidings of their missing friends. From their speedy return we are led to the conclusion that they received information at Crescent City which caused them to abandon all hope." • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865, dispatch of August 14: "Wells, Fargo and Co.'s messenger, whose name you notice among the list of lost, was our beloved friend, Joseph A. Lord, whom we have intimately known for the last eleven years, and mourn and feel his loss as deeply as we would a brother's. His wife and child were here on a visit, and intended returning to San Francisco on the *Del Norte*, this week, to join him. The shock was terrible to her. She is quite broken-hearted."

Luckey, Samuel N., Mr. Traveling with his wife and two young children.[3] • • • Lost.

Luckey, Samuel N., Mrs. • • • Lost.

Luckey, No. 1 infant child • • • Lost.

Luckey, No. 2 infant child • • • Lost.

[1] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 253.

[2] *Alta California*, August 10, 1865. Report from J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City, August 6, describing the events aboard ship during the disaster, as reported by Yates.

[3] Accounts varied; the *Alta California*, August 2,1865, listed: "S.N. Luckey, wife and child" and, separately, "Mrs. Luckey and two children."

Lynch, James • • • Lost.

Manly, R.S. • • • Lost. • • • Body recovered • • • *Alta California*, August 26, 1865: "In addition to the list of bodies found, already published, we received the following by the *Del Norte*, buried at Gold Bluff and vicinity. [The bodies of Col. Cardiff and R.S. Manly; the remainder being unidentified.]"

Mathewson [or Matherson], B. • • • Body recovered at Chetco, OR. • • • Mathewson was affiliated with the Providence Mining Company and was traveling to accompany equipment destined to be offloaded at Portland and shipped to the interior. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (supplementary list of identified bodies): "There has been found...at Chetco, Oregon, the body of B. Mathewson. The latter had on his person certificates of deposit of $21,000...."

McHendle [or McHardle], David • • • Lost.

Meyer, S. • • • Lost.

Micklet [or Micklett], Albert • • • Lost.

Millett, Thomas • • • Bought ticket after boarding ship.[1] • • • Body recovered.[2] • • • *Alta California*, August 6, 1865: "Among the passengers by the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* who did not buy tickets until after going on board, and whose names were therefore omitted from the list heretofore published, were Millett, a carpenter, who leaves a wife and daughter in this city [other passengers were also listed]." • • • *Alta California*, October 28, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte* arrived from Humboldt last evening.... The body of Mr. Millet, of Oriental Lodge, which was expected by the *Del Norte*, did not arrive."

Morgan, S.B. • • • Lost.

Moulton, C.Z. • • • Bought ticket after boarding ship.[3] • • • Lost • • • *Alta California*, August 6, 1865: "Among the passengers by the ill-fated *Brother Jonathan* who did not buy tickets until after going on board, and whose names were therefore omitted from the list heretofore published, were: C.Z. Moulton, a clairvoyant physician, partner of Dr. Smith, No. 4 Fourth Street, San Francisco [other passengers were also listed]."

Moyle, Thomas • • • Lost.

Moyle, Thomas, Mrs. • • • Lost.

Nisbet, James • • • Editor of the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* • • • Body recovered at sea seven miles offshore.[4] • • • In 1864 he resided at 30 Rincon Place, San Francisco. He was buried at Lone Mountain Cemetery, August 27, 1865. • • • *The Annals of San Francisco*, 1855, bears on its title page: "By Frank Soule, John H. Gihon, M.D., and James Nisbet." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865: "Among the passengers was James Nisbet, one of the editors of this paper, who was on his way to Oregon and British Columbia to spend three or four weeks of relaxation from the laborious duties of his profession. Mr. Nisbet had been connected with the *Bulletin* since 1855 and is well known to the community." • • • *Alta California*, August 3, 1865: "Mr. Nisbet, of the *Evening Bulletin*, was on a trip to Oregon, Washington Territory and British Columbia, and started with the intention of being absent four or five weeks.' He was unmarried, and leaves no relatives in this country."[7] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 4, 1865: "A large number of relatives and friends of the passengers...went up on the *Del Norte*, this afternoon, to the scene of the accident, in hopes of recovering the bodies of their friends. Among them was a party from this office who went to search for the body of Mr. Nisbet...." • • • *Alta California*, August 4, 1865: "As one of the principal editors of a leading daily journal, he held a position of much influence, which he used with strict regard to the rights of the public and to his own duties. In his editorial course as out of it, he was firmly devoted to exalted principles of honor and honesty. Neither out of favor for a friend, nor out of malice against an enemy, would he consent to be used for or against anybody. James Nisbet was not the man to take part in anything that would degrade the press, or detract from its power as a teacher and protector of the people. He had a great respect for himself, and thought a newspaper should have the qualities which become a gentleman. He was a friend of progress, and popular rights in politics; and liberal in his religious opinions. Highly educated, familiar with all the best books of English literature, a hard student, a close observer, and a logical thinker, he was a good talker and a most pleasant and jovial companion. As a friend he was very generous and obliging. There was no meanness, no ostentation, no offensive point in his character. He was a native of Scotland, about 45 years of age, and was trained to the bar, but became a notary and a broker, in which positions he made a comfortable fortune, but he lost his property by the railroad panic in 1845, and went to Australia. In 1853 he came to California, where he was first employed in compiling *The Annals of San Francisco*, and afterwards in the editorial rooms of the *Chronicle* and *Bulletin*. Before coming to this country he published a novel, entitled *The Siege of Damascus*, and he had an ambition to return to the profession of authorship and leave some work that would secure him an honorable fame. He died a bachelor, leaving a brother in this state, and several sisters in Scotland."[8] • • • *Sacramento Union*, August 4, 1865, printed this correspondence from San Francisco datelined August 2: "James Nisbet, long and well known as one of the editors and proprietors of the *Evening Bulletin*, was also on board. It was that gentleman's first absence from his editorial duties on a trip of either business or pleasure, for some time, and it is strange, indeed, if his stars have guided him so unfortunately in its consummation... I wonder whether those who have pursued him so bitterly in life cannot find a kindly word to say over his grave. Brusque and seemingly harsh in his exterior he was yet possessed of a warm and generous heart, and always aimed to be just, both in his public and personal relations. No man, perhaps, who had ever lived on this coast had been more abused and less known and understood than James Nisbet." • • • *Sacramento Union* August 5, 1865: "It was his labor that made the *Bulletin* instructive and attractive in its news and literary departments; his finishing strokes were seen in almost every column, all of which he made consistent one with the other. The editorials upon local and national politics and upon the passing topics of the day, many of which have doubtless provoked a multitude of resentments, were none of them the production of Nisbet. He engaged in no strife, assailed no one, was offensive to no one, but was useful and serviceable to his partners, of value to the state and country, and an honor to his kind." • • • *Alta California*, August 10, 1865 (report from J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City August 6, describing the events aboard ship during the disaster, as reported by Jacob Yates, quartermaster): "Captain DeWolf, Gen. Wright, Mr. Lord (Wells Fargo & Co.'s messenger) and Mr.

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[1] *Alta California*, August 6, 1865. [illegible] *Brother Jonathan: Wrecked and Recovered*.

[2] *Alta California*, October 28, 1865.

[3] *Alta California*, August 6, 1865.

[4] Body No. 14 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1865.

[5] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864, p. 339.

[6] Alfred L. Lomax, "*Brother Jonathan*: Pioneer Steamship of the Pacific Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 60, September 1959, p. 348, commented: "James Nisbet, the brilliant editor and part owner of the San Francisco *Bulletin*, was returning to Victoria to obtain evidence in a libel suit."

[7] The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 28, 1865, noted that J. Nisbet's will had mentioned a brother working for the Pacific Railroad at Clipper Gap, California.

[8] His will mentioned that he had a brother, Thomas Nisbet, "at present engaged on the Pacific Railroad, near Clipper Gap, California" and, *per contra*, had just one sister.

Nisbet, were on deck when last seen by the rescued crew." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 16, 1865 (from a correspondent in Crescent City, August 10): "Mr. Nisbet's body was readily recognized by your correspondent and several other gentlemen. Papers and other articles which will be taken to you by Mr. [J.G.] Knower (of the San Francisco police) will confirm his identity beyond a doubt." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865 (dispatch from Crescent City, August 10): "Mr. Knower has the bodies of Mr. Nisbet, G.W. Pollock and D. Parrish, in metallic cases. They were each identified beyond a doubt. He will take them to San Francisco on the *Del Norte.* Mr. Knower has been indefatigable in his efforts." • • • *Alta California,* August 25, 1865: "The following letter, received yesterday, needs no explanation: "Crescent City, August 13th, 1865: Thomas Nisbet: Dear Sir: Among the papers found upon the body of your brother was a will written in lead pencil, evidently written after the ship struck. The will makes you sole executor. The document was discovered by myself and dried upon the stove at my place of business. I have it in my safe, and shall send it to you by Mr. Knower, a police officer of San Francisco, who is here. I have made a copy of it, and can, if necessary, identify the original. This I have done in case of any accident. I thought it proper to notify you of the facts contained herein so that you can secure the document immediately upon its arrival. Very respectfully, yours, Geo. W. Russell." • • • *Alta California,* August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet, Esq., late editor and part proprietor of the *Evening Bulletin,* of this city, Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil.... The funeral of Mr. Nisbet will take place tomorrow, at 12_ o'clock, from Calvary Church, Bush Street...." • • • *Alta California,* August 28, 1865: "The funeral of the late James Nisbet yesterday was attended by a large number of persons, including many of the old and well known citizens of San Francisco. Rev. Mr. Buel was the officiating clergyman, and delivered the sermon at Calvary Church, at half past 12 o'clock." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 28, 1865, printed this account (together with the circumstances of writing his will, as quoted in Chapter [illegible]): "The funeral service of the late James Nisbet of the *Bulletin,* who lost his life in the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan,* took place at Calvary Presbyterian Church yesterday afternoon. The St. Andrew's Society and a large number of the friends of the deceased were in attendance and followed the remains to their last resting place in Lone Mountain Cemetery, where they were interred beside those of James King of William, the founder of the *Bulletin.* The Rev. Mr. Buel conducted the exercises in the church and preached an appropriate sermon from Psalms xc 5: 'Thou carriest them away as with a flood.' He remarked in opening that death was a terrible reality in any of its forms of manifestation, but especially when it appeared to those 'who go down to the sea in ships, and do business upon the great waters.' At such times he infrequently leagues himself with the flames and gives his unhappy victims the only choice of destruction by fire or by water. At other times he rides a destroying demon on the wings of the wind, and drives the ill-fated upon an iron-bound coast, while its precious freight perish in sight of land and almost within reach of succor. Now he lurks concealed beneath a hidden rock right on the vessel's track, and when the dreadful concussion takes place, leaps in upon the shattered wreck and drags his victims down beneath the waves. In all these various forms of death at sea have the hearts of this community been shocked during the past few years. The *Central America* struggled for hours against the storm, until the women and children in her cabins had been cared for, and then with one plunge went down in mid ocean, carrying down with her to a watery grave those self-sacrificing men who would not save themselves at the expense of their wives and children. The disaster of the *Golden Gate* seemed almost the occurrence of yesterday. And now comes the sad news that the *Brother Jonathan* is lost at sea.... The sea has cast up its dead, and one of its victims now lies before us.... Mr. Nisbet was born in Glasgow in the year 1816. His parents were of high respectability and considerable fortune, and their beloved son enjoyed during his youth every opportunity desirable for the civilization of his naturally curious mind.... Having met with reverses in his pecuniary affairs, he left his native city and visited Australia, remaining there a brief time, and afterwards returning to Glasgow. A few weeks after his return he set sail for California, and arrived here in November 1853, where his literary capabilities were soon called into requisition. He first found employment in writing a work relating to this city, *The Annals of San Francisco*.... While so engaged his industry, discriminating judgment, and power to thoroughly perform great intellectual labor, at once surprised and delighted his employers, one of whom, about the same time, became part proprietor of a prominent daily newspaper—the *California Chronicle.* He continued in that position until about March 1856, when, at the solicitation of James King of Wm., he consented to accept a higher position in the editorial department of the *Bulletin* than circumstances permitted him to occupy in the one where previously employed. With an industry almost unparalleled, he continually occupied the position of supervising editor of that journal for more than eight years...." • • • *Alta California* October 16, 1865 (from a letter received from "a respectable citizen of Crescent City," dated October 9): "[Contrary to a report that Officer Knower had done most of the work recovering and burying the bodies], Knower did not assist in the recovery of any bodies; the principal portion of them being recovered by ourselves—over 20 of them, including Nisbet, Parrish, Pollock, Waite, Dryer [Dyer] and others out at sea, from three to eight miles from Crescent City, at a great deal of labor, there being five boats employed recovering bodies, which was no pleasant business, all the bodies found being brought ashore, without respect to color, and in no instance was there anything taken from them, which in many places would have been the case, it being a very easy matter to have taken everything of value from them and let them go at the mercy of the sea." • • • *American Annual Cyclopædia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1865,* p. 645, noted that Nisbet was about 65 years old and had been lost in the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* off the coast of Oregon (*sic*). "He was by birth a Scotchman, and having been somewhat unsuccessful in his career as novelist and journalist in England and Australia, he removed to California, not far from 1855. His first literary venture in this country was *The Annals of California,* which although pecuniarily a failure, led to his employment as news editor on *The Chronicle.* Later, he accepted a like position on *The Bulletin,* then edited by James King, who was subsequently assassinated during the disturbances prior to the reign of the Vigilance Committee. Upon the death of Mr. King, Mr. Nisbet became editor of that paper." • • • "The California Recollections of Caspar T. Hopkins," *California Historical Society Quarterly,* Vol. XXVI, No. 4, December 1947, included a commentary that mentioned Hopkins' relationship to Nisbet (Hopkins' wife Almira was bequeathed $5,000 in Nisbet's will written aboard the sinking *Brother Jonathan*): "The Alameda Railroad had just been completed, and Nisbet and the celebrated A.A. Cohen (deceased December 1887) owned 28 acres on its line at Masticks Station, where they had built a pretty eight-room cottage for rent. I took that cottage for a year and furnished it cheaply, and we lived there for three months, when we were driven out of it by the nuisance of continual picnics on the adjoining lot and by constant poisoning from the poison oak (*Rhus toxicodendron*) with which the place abounded. Our friend and landlord, Nisbet, still came to us on Saturday nights and spent Sundays with us. We parted with him forever on July 23rd [1865], under circumstances none of us will forget while we live.... [Returning home from a trip on that day], Sunday, I found my house fence surrounded by the German Regiment from the city, who with their friends had been enjoying a picnic on the adjoining grounds. They were most of them more or less drunk; the day was hot, and they were crazy for water. Nisbet and my wife

and daughters were all hard at work pumping and delivering water to these thousands of people, as the alternative was having the house sacked! The train took them away after I arrived, and then I found that Nisbet intended to start for Victoria on the steamer *Brother Jonathan* on the following Friday, his object being to obtain testimony in a suit he had brought against the *Chronicle* newspaper for repeated and malicious libels against him. My wife did all she could to dissuade him from sailing on that old vessel, and on Friday she seemed to have a premonition of the coming disaster, but he laughed at her superstition, as he called it, in his bluff, hearty way, and bidding us all goodbye, he carried out his design and went gaily to his death.... [Here was inserted an account of the passing of the *Brother Jonathan* and the writing of Nisbet's will aboard, the will concluding with this:] 'My Dear Ma [Almira Hopkins, a.k.a. Mrs. Caspar Hopkins]: A thousand affectionate adieus. You spoke of my sailing on Friday—hangman's day—and the unlucky *Jonathan*. Well here I am, with death before me. My love to you all— to Caspar, to Dita, to Belle, Mellie and little Myra—kiss her for me. Never Forget. Grandpa.' ...His body was found several days afterwards and the papers reached the intended hands. But the will, not having been witnessed according to law, was refused probate. The executor took advantage of this fact to pay but $3,000 to the legatee [Mrs. Hopkins] instead of $5,000. But it was all the same in the end, for the fund arising from its use was ultimately lost by my wife in mining stock speculations."[1]

Northrup, Charles C. • • • Lost.

Orselli [or Orseli], Joseph • • • Lost. • • • The closest 1864 directory listing located is Joseph Ortelli, drayman, who worked at 538 Washington Street. He resided on the north side of Filbert Street near Taylor Street.[2]

Parrish, Daniel • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Body recovered.[3] • • • Parrish kept the Crescent City Hotel (in *San Francisco*, not Crescent City, California). Under various proprietors this venerable establishment had been a popular stopping place since the early days of the Gold Rush; in 1850 it was managed by Winley and Lear.[4] • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865, from a dispatch of August 10, reported by J.G. Knower: "Today at this place, from eight to 10 miles distant, the following bodies have been picked up by boatmen; Leach (General Wright's orderly), E.J. Lount, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish...." • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865: "We are informed that among the lost passengers on the *Brother Jonathan* was Daniel Parrish, who kept the Crescent City Hotel, near the Niantic, in early days, and afterwards the Portsmouth House, and still later the Chicago Hotel." • • • *Alta California*, August 17, 1865: "Thirty-three bodies have been picked up, and more were coming ashore every day. Most of the bodies had been identified, among which were Nisbet, Parrish, Pollock, Dyer and Perkins, and others I do not recollect." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (dispatch from Crescent City, August 10): "Mr. Knower has the bodies of Mr. Nisbet, G.W. Pollock and D. Parrish, in metallic cases. They were each identified beyond a doubt. He will take them to San Francisco on the *Del Norte*. Mr. Knower has been indefatigable in his efforts." • • • *Alta California*, August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet..., Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil. ..." • • • *Alta California* October 16, 1865 (from a letter received from "a respectable citizen of Crescent City," dated October 9): "[Contrary to a report that Officer Knower had done most of the work recovering and burying the bodies] Knower did not assist in the recovery of any bodies; the principal portion of them being recovered by ourselves—over 20 of them, including Nisbet, Parrish, Pollock, Waite, Dryer [Dyer] and others out at sea, from three to eight miles from Crescent City, at a great deal of labor, there being five boats employed recovering bodies, which was no pleasant business, all the bodies found being brought ashore, without respect to color, and in no instance was there anything taken from them, which in many places would have been the case, it being a very easy matter to have taken everything of value from them and let them go at the mercy of the sea."

Perkins, William • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Body recovered.[5] • • • His body, apparently washed up on the shore, was found by August 16, 1865, and listed as No. 25 in the coroner's report. • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "No. 25. William Perkins, of San Francisco."

Plass, Mary, Miss. • • • Lost. • • • Mr. Plass, of Napa, California, lost two daughters and a grandchild. Mary is believed to have been the younger of two sisters.[6] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (dispatch from Crescent City, August 10): "Mr. Platt [Plass], who lost two daughters and a grandchild, has also been very active, but has not yet been rewarded by the discovery of any of his own dead." • • • *Alta California* October 16, 1865 (from a letter received from "a respectable citizen of Crescent City," dated October 9, commenting on an earlier article): "Mr. Placer [Plass], a San Francisco gentleman [actually from Napa], who had two daughters lost on the ill fated steamer, was here at the time of Mr. Knower's visit, and used a great deal more exertion than Mr. Knower in recovering bodies, he being out for days at a time up and down the coast, looking for them." • Miss Mary Plass is the "Aunt Mary" referred to in the account from the *San Francisco Call*, August 8, 1865, quoted in Chapter 13 (this account ties together the Plass and Brooks families).

Pollock, George W. • • • Body recovered.[7] • • • In 1864 Pollock lived at 620 Clay Street, San Francisco.[8] • • • Pollock had formerly operated a book and stationery store on Market Street, San Francisco, but had recently sold it. In July 1865 he was traveling on the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* "with the intention of again embarking in [the book and stationery] business in the North. He was on board the *Washoe* at the time of her explosion and received slight injuries.[9] He leaves a wife in this city who is a teacher in the public schools."[10] • • • Subsequently, a Captain Pollock, no doubt a relative, went from San Francisco to Crescent City on the steamer *Del Norte* to

[1] At the time there was much excitement in mining stocks, particularly for companies with works in nearby Nevada.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. 312.

[3] Body No. 2 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865. Also *Alta California*, August 17, 1865.

[4] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. VII, 1860-1890, pp. 182 and 188.

[5] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 16, 1865; *Alta California*, August 17, 1865.

[6] The Plass surname must have been spoken to reporters, not spelled out, for in various accounts it is misspelled as Platt, Place and Placer.

[7] Body No. 3 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865.

[8] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, 1864-5, p. [illegible].

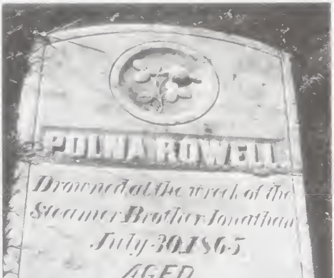
[9] On September 6, 1864, the boiler of the S.S. *Washoe* exploded as the ship entered the Slough, about 41 miles downriver from Sacramento. About 100 people were killed, and the vessel was a total loss. Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain") wrote a lengthy description of the disaster in the *San Francisco Call*, September 7, 1864. Many of the survivors were taken to Sacramento by the vessel of [illegible] California Steam Navigation Company's S.S. *Antelope*. The S.S. *Washoe* had been built by Henry Owens at his San Francisco shipyard, and launched on April 5, 1864.

[10] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 5, 1865; similarly, *Alta California*, August 4, 1865.

gain information.[1] His body was found on August 9, 1865, according to a letter from J.G. Wall of Crescent City: "The hody of George W. Pollock was brought ashore today."[2] • • • In another account from Crescent City, dated August 10, 1865, J.G. Knower, a San Francisco police officer who was on the scene, reported that Pollock's body and those of certain others had been picked up by boatmen "eight to 10 miles distant."[3] It was subsequently reported that Knower "has the bodies of Mr. Nisbet, G.W. Pollock and D. Parrish, in metallic cases. They were each identified beyond a doubt. He will take them to San Francisco on the *Del Norte*. Mr. Knower has been indefatigahle in his efforts."[4] • • • *Alta California,* August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet..., Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil...."

Pound, Fred A. • • • Lost.

Richards, James R. • • • Body recovered. • • • Richards was a principal of the partnership of Richards & McCraken, "well known Front Street merchants."[5] The firm, with John McCraken as co-partner, was located at 405 Front Street. Richards lived at 1227 Washington Street.[6] The partnership also had an office at 16 North Front Street, Portland, and an agent in Victoria. • • • He was traveling to Victoria to meet his wife, who was on her way to that port from Honolulu on a vessel belonging to the Richards & McCraken firm. Richards was survived by his wife and "several children."[7] • • • *Oregonian,* August 4, 1865: "Mr. James R. Richards, Senior, of San Francisco, partner of the firm of Richards & McCraken is also lost. He was coming hither to join his wife and children, who are expected on the bark A.A. *Eldridge* from Honolulu, now due. Who shall describe the sorrows of the mother's heart in this instance, when she is informed that instead of meeting him here, she will be alone with the orphan little ones widowed and distressed; although among the warmest of friends yet the one held most sacred is gone." • • • *Alta California,* August 5, 1865: "The steamship *Del Norte* leaves for the north today, carrying a number of the friends of the victims, in the hope of being able to recover the remains of those so dear to them in life. Among the passengers is Col. Wright, son of the lamented general; Mr. Noah [*sic*; Knower was intended], hrother in law of Mr. Richards, of the firm of Richards and McCraken...." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865 (supplementary list of identified bodies): "There has been found, at Gold Bluffs, the body of Jas. R. Richards...." • • • *Alta California,* August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet..., Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil...."



Cemetery marker for Polna Rowell. (Del Norte County Historical Society)

Rowell, David (or Daniel) C. • • • Body recovered. • • • *Alta California,* August 15, 1865, included this from an August 14 account: "Since writing the enclosed two more trunks have drifted ashore, one containing a panorama and fixtures; the other belonging to David C. Rowell." • • • *Alta California,* August 15, 1865, included this from J.G. Knower, datelined Crescent City, August 10: "Trunks belonging to the following have been picked up: A.A. Stone, David Rowell, J.S. Benton." • • • His tombstone in the Brother Jonathan Cemetery in Crescent City gives his age as 38 years, 6 months, and 17 days.

Rowell, Polna (Mrs. David) • • • Body recovered. • • • Her tombstone in the Brother Jonathan Cemetery in Crescent City gives her age as 22 years, 6 months, and 7 days.

Rowell, child No. 1 • • • Body recovered.

Rowell, child No. 2 • • • Body possibly recovered.

Rowell, child No. 3 • • • Body possibly recovered.

Rowell, child No. 4 • • • Body possihly recovered.

Shirpser, Nathalie ("Nettey"), Miss. • • • Body recovered? • • • Nettey Shirpser, a nurse, was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Shirpser, a merchant who lived at 677 Harrison Street, San Francisco. • • • *Alta California,* August 25, 1865, account dated August 24: "The body of Isaac Weil, brother of David Weil of Portland; also a young lady supposed to be Miss N. Shirser [*sic*], found at Gold Bluff.... Miss Shiser was a nurse."[9] • • • *Alta California* October 2, 1887, printed this as part of a story about the discovery of the ship at the bottom of the sea: "Since then there have been persistent efforts to locate the wreck on account of the treasure which hitherto all efforts had been unsuccessful. There was one lady in this city, however, whose hopes of the discovery of the wreck were based on grounds of a deeper nature. Miss Nettey Shirpser, a young lady 17 years of age, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. I. Shirpser, of this city, was among the lost. Mrs. Shirpser, with a mother's heart, has anxiously waited for the discovery of the wreck, hoping and believing with a mother's fondness that it would be followed by the finding of some relic of her unfortunate child, who, she believes, was drowned in the bridal stateroom, which she occupied. Mrs. Shirpser and her husband have been absent from the city for over a year, but by a singular coincidence returned to San Francisco on the very day when the news of the discovery was telegraphed here. The old couple reside at 419 Geary Street, and are waiting anxiously for further news as to the results of the explorations which will undouhtedly he made, now that the situation of the wrecked

[1] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865.
[2] *Alta California,* August 14, 1865.
[3] *Alta California,* August 15, 1865.
[4] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865.
[5] *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865. *Alta California,* August 3, 1865
[6] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864-5, p. 336.
[7] *Sacramento Bee,* August 4, 1865. *The Portland Directory for the Year Commencing January 1865.*
[8] *Alta California,* August 3, 1865.
[9] As noted subsequently, the remains of Miss Shirpser (correct spelling) had not been found, or at least her parents did not know they had been found

vessel has been discovered.'" • • • *Alta California* July 26, 1890:[1] "A ceremony which is to take place tomorrow at the Home of Peace Cemetery in San Mateo County, recalls vividly to mind one of the most appalling marine disasters ever recorded in the annals of ocean travel. Twenty-five years ago the *Brother Jonathan* was lost.... Among the passengers who perished in the wreck was Nathalie Shirpser, a young lady, 17 years of age, and of great beauty and accomplishments. Her parents have at last abandoned all hope of ever recovering the remains of their beloved child, although in all the long years that have passed since that sad disaster they have clung to as belief that some trace of their lost one might be discovered. The young girl was the daughter of Isidor and Marie Shirpser of this city, and they for years left no means untried to recover the remains. Whole bolts of cloth, of which the unfortunate girl's dress was made, were cut into small bits and distributed among the Indian tribes along the coast, for a hundred miles or so north and south of the wreck. Her photographs were also widely distributed, and Indians were paid to patrol the coast, or to cruise in their canoes in the supposed locality of the wreck. All efforts were in vain, and the parents finally were convinced that their daughter must have been locked in her cabin when the ship went down, and consequently her body never rose to the surface nor washed ashore. While the parents could not but feel that the hope of finding the remains was a delusive one, they could not bring themselves to abandon it altogether until quite recently. Tomorrow a monument which has been erected to the memory of the long-ago deceased girl will be unveiled. It is a plain but handsome shaft of marble. Near the apex is a niche in which there is a bust of Nathalie. The inscription on the shaft is: 'In Memory of "Nacka" Nathalie Shirpser. Born 17th of November, 1848. Eldest child of Isidor and Marie Shirpser. Lost on the "Brother Jonathan," from San Francisco to Portland, which was wrecked July 30, 1865.' 'Nacka' was the Hebrew name of the young lady. July 30, 1865 was a the Hebrew fast day known as Tishabeab (a fast observed by the very orthodox Jews, commemorative of the destruction of the temple). This year, which is the year 5626 according to the Hebrew calendar, the fast occurs on July 27th, or tomorrow. It was for that reason that Mr. and Mrs. Shirpser decided to unveil their daughter's monument tomorrow...."

Smith, Victor • • • Lost. • • • On July 28, 1865, he boarded the S.S. *Brother Jonathan* to travel north to Puget Sound to join his wife Caroline and their four children, who had gone north on the *Brother Jonathan* on her preceding trip. The story of Smith's controversial actions in the 1860s is related in detail in Chapter 12. Thus, the following are supplementary notes. • • • *Alta California*, August 3, 1865: "Victor Smith, formerly Collector at Port Angeles, Puget Sound, was wrecked on the *Golden Rule*, on Roncador Reef, last month, and the illness which he contracted from exposure at that time was the cause of his remaining here when the lost steamer sailed."[2] • • • *Sacramento Daily Bee*, August 4, 1865: "Victor Smith, who had done more to prevent smuggling from the British provinces on Puget Sound into the United States than any other man, was one of the passengers on the *Brother Jonathan*. He was on the *Golden Rule* when she was wrecked, and nearly died of exposure from that disaster. This time he was not so fortunate as to escape." • • • *Sacramento Union*, August 4, 1865, printed this correspondence from San Francisco datelined August 2: "Victor Smith, Collector of Puget Sound, I also notice was among the passengers. Poor Victor, his lines have not fallen in pleasant places of late. During his collectorship he was made the theme of much censure and misrepresentation, but an official investigation of his acts proved a clean record for him, and all efforts at his removal fell idly to the ground. He came on the *Golden Rule*, which was wrecked on the other side, losing, in common with all the other passengers, all his personal effects.... And now it is reported that by this second wreck he has lost his life! Really it seems of little use to struggle in the hands of destiny, or to pull back when our Fate beckons to us!"

Snow, Eliza Smart, Miss. • • • Lost. • • • This passenger is listed as Miss E.T. Snow in certain records. In 1864, Miss Eliza T. Snow lived at 1123 Clay Street, San Francisco, and was an assistant at the Powell Street Primary School. In 1865 she was listed as a teacher residing at 3 Martha Place.[3] However, the passenger is probably the same person as Eliza Smart Snow, chronicled by well-known New England marine historian Edward Rowe Snow in *Great Gales and Dire Disasters*, 1952, pp. 164-168: "'Oh, yes, that was your great-aunt Eliza who was lost at sea on the *Brother Jonathan*.' How often I had heard that remark in my boyhood days when, on visits to Rockland, Maine, I glanced through the cabinet pictures which were so much a part of the old-fashioned parlors of the Maine sea captains. The knowledge that my own great-aunt had been lost at sea off California strangely affected me, and ever since I first heard of her I was anxious to discover more about this relative of mine who had been drowned aboard the vessel with the unusual name. Now I have the entire story, or probably as much as can ever be discovered. Miss Eliza Smart Snow was born in South Thomaston [Maine] in 1837, and moved with her family to Rockland in 1850. Eliza was 12 years old when the Gold Rush of 1849 started. She had seen her older sisters Elvira and Lavinia, her brother-in-law Joshua K. Thorndike, and many friends leave for California in such a romantic way, sailing from the Rockland pier to arrive eventually at Panama, crossing the Isthmus and then boarding a steamer for San Francisco. Her brother Israel went to California about the same time by way of Cape Horn. Finally, Eliza could no longer resist the temptation to follow them. She set sail from Rockland and arrived at Panama. There she rode astride a pack mule across to the West coast and took one of Colonel Astor's [*sic*] steamers for San Francisco. Eliza attended the San Francisco Normal School from which she was graduated in 1864. Then she taught school. Finally came her decision to go to visit her sister, Elvira, who was then living at Port Ludlow on Puget Sound in Washington Territory. The steamer chosen for the journey, the *Brother Jonathan*, was well known up and down the coast for her good service.... The sailing was scheduled for noon, July 28, 1865. The friend, Mr. Sayward, who drove her down to the pier that morning, tried to dissuade her from going.... At high noon the *Brother Jonathan's* shrill whistle split the San Francisco air, and she sailed out through the Golden Gate with 192 passengers and 50 members of the crew." [Here follows a description of the fatal wreck.]

Stackpole, Mrs. • • • Lost.

Stackpole, Mrs., infant of • • • Lost.

Stackpole, Mrs., older child of • • • Lost.

Stanford, J., Mrs. • • • Lost.

Stone, A.A., Mr. • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California*, August 24, 1865 (excerpt from letter from Dugan & Wall, of Crescent City, August 9): "No bodies have, as yet, been found, but today some of the wreck is coming ashore: a spanker boom, some of the cabin doors and about eight feet square of the upper deck and one trunk of clothing, marked A.A. Stone, Portland, Oregon, came ashore." • • • *Alta California*, August 15, 1865, printed this item from Crescent City, a report filed by J.G. Knowles on August 10: "Trunks belonging to the following have been picked up: A.A. Stone, David Rowell, J.E. Benton." The same paper included an account dated August 18: "But today a

[1] A brief mention of the monument was printed in the *Jewish Record*, August 2, 1890.

[2] This account is conflicting as it implies that Smith remained in San Francisco when the *Brother Jonathan* sailed. Regarding Smith, Don Marshall, *Oregon Shipwrecks*, 1984, commented: "Victor Smith, ex-Collector of Customs at Port Angeles, Washington Territory, was dismissed from his post as a direct result of Governor [Anson G.] Henry's accusation that he conspired to set up his own little dynasty." By coincidence, Henry was among those lost on the *Brother Jonathan*.

[3] Langley's *San Francisco Directory*, editions of 1864-5 and 1865-6.

good deal of the ship is coming ashore. Pieces of the cabin doors, etc. part of upper deck, a spanker-boom, one trunk, marked 'A.A. Stone, Portland,' containing women's and children's clothing and one pair of Colt revolvers, all in good order except being wet. The articles will be dried and sent to San Francisco on next steamer going down."

Stone, A.A., Mrs. • • • A woman's body supposed to be Mrs. Stone was recovered (*Alta California,* August 15, 1865). It was either Mrs. A.A. Stone or Mrs. B.H. Stone (see below). • • • Body recovered. • • • *Alta California,* August 15, 1865, via Canonville, August 12, as reported by J.G. Knower: "Today at this place, from eight to 10 miles distant, the following bodies have been picked up by boatmen; Leach (General Wright's orderly), E.J. Lount, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish; a woman, name unknown- supposed to be Mrs. Stone, found on the beach below the town."

Stone, A.A., Mrs., infant child of • • • Lost.

Stone, B.H., Mr. • • • Body recovered.[1]

Stone, B.H., Mrs. • • • Body recovered.

Stone, B.H., Mrs., infant child of • • • Body recovered.

'**Stott, Martha, Mrs.** • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Saved.[2] • • • She and her son had booked passage to Victoria. "Mrs. Stott was on her way to Victoria, where she was engaged to work as a waiter in the saloon of John C. Keenan, formerly of this city [San Francisco]." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.... Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt,[4] Miss M.G.[5] Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew." • • • *Alta California,* August 10, 1865, included an account adapted from an interview with Stott (cited earlier),[3] including this: "Mrs. Stott, who was on her way to Victoria, with her little son, six or seven years of age, was among those who were saved and returned by the *Del Norte.* She says that she had been somewhat sick on Sunday morning and remained upon the hurricane deck, in company with her [illegible] a girl named Elizabeth Wild, who was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan. When the vessel struck she noticed that everything about the deck appeared to be loose and the whole vessel apparently shattered. A moment after planks came up alongside from the vessel's bottom. She got into the small boat as soon as possible with her son and the girl Wild."

Stott, Martha, Mrs., son of • • • Not on passenger list, but identified from other accounts. • • • Saved.[6] • • • Young Mr. Stott was [illegible] about six or seven years old. He and his mother, who had booked passage to Victoria, were among the survivors in the surfboat that reached Crescent City.

Strong [or Strang], J. • • • Body recovered.[7] • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865, included his name in a listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall in Crescent City: "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army; E.J. Lount, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored); Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army; Charles Law (Negro); James [illegible], A. [illegible] [illegible], freight clerk of ship; James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.E. Anthony."

Styles, A.L., Mr. • • • Lost.

Styles, A.L., Mrs. • • • Lost.

Thornton, Cecilia, Mrs. • • • Lost. • • • *Alta California,* August 6, 1865, stated that the entry clerk of the steamship company misunderstood the name of Mrs. C. Tourtain, daughter and child, and that it should have been listed as Mrs. Cecilia Thornton, daughter and child.

Thornton, Cecilia, young child of, name unknown • • • See above. • • • Lost.

Thornton, Ida [daughter of Cecilia] • • • Lost. • • • See above.

Tuttle, L.G. • • • Lost.

'**Tweedale, Mary Ann, Mrs.** • • • Saved.[8] • • • Mary Ann Tweedale, possibly an Englishwoman, recently arrived in San Francisco and headed to Portland to join her son, was among the survivors. In later years she remarried and was known as Mrs. Altrie or Tweedale-Altrie. By 1894 she lived in a cottage in Albany, Oregon. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half-past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.... Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt,[9] Miss M.G. Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew." • • • *Alta California,* August 10, 1865 (Excerpt from statement of Mrs. Stott): "Mrs. Tweedale, an old lady, who had come direct from England, and was on her way to Victoria [*sic*] to join her son, was one of the saved." • • • *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 11, 1894 (Recently expressed recollection by Mary Altrie, formerly Mary Tweedale, now living in Albany, Oregon): "Mrs. Altrie, who is probably the only living female survivor, is now 74 years old. She lives alone in a neat cottage in Albany, a quiet Oregon town. She is not in good health, and is sinking gently and in full possession of her faculties to final rest. "I sailed from Liverpool, England, on June 13, 1865, going to New York on my way to join my son, W.C. Tweedale, in Oregon.[10] From there I went to the isthmus and thence on the steamer *Constitution* to San Francisco. I left San Francisco July 28, 1865, on the steamer *Brother Jonathan* for Portland...." [The balance of her account is quoted in Chapter 12.]

Veroney, J. • • • Body recovered. • • • *Oregon Reporter,* August 5, 1865: "[Body] No. 17, a man supposed to be J. Veroney from a steamer ticket found on his person and a kerchief found on this neck."

Waite, Edward D., Lieutenant, U.S.A. • • • Adjutant to General George Wright. • • • Body recovered.[11] • • • Waite, who had entered the military service in 1861, was the only staff member who accompanied the officer.[12] He acted as aide de camp and assisted Gen. Wright with everyday affairs during the voyage. Several weeks before leaving on the *Brother Jonathan,* he had signed his name to a long petition by

[1] Body No. 35 listed in the coroner's supplementary report published in the *Sacramento Daily Bee,* August 21 1865.

[2] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865.

[3] Statement of Mrs. Stott given in the *Sacramento Daily Bee,* August 11, 1865. Earlier, Keenan had operated a saloon in Sacramento, CA.

[4] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and child.

[5] Actually, Martha E. Wilder.

[6] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865.

[7] Body No. 17, "J. Strang," listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865.

[8] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 3, 1865. She is also mentioned in the *San Francisco Chronicle,* February 11, 1894; by that time she was known as Mrs. Altrie.

[9] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. Mina Bernhardt and child.

[10] An 1865 account, quoted earlier, suggests she was going to Victoria.

[11] Body No. 7 listed in the coroner's report published in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 17, 1865, and the *Alta California* of the same date.

[12] *Alta California* August 2, 1865. *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* August 2, 1865. However, there could have been other aides aboard (perhaps listed among the other names in the present roster), for on Sunday, July 30, Greenleaf Curtis, a soldier who was near the scene, included this in his diary: "The mate said that there were about 300 passengers and crew aboard. General Wright and four staff were aboard." If so, the other three staff members in addition to Waite may be listed under other names in the present roster.

San Francisco citizens encouraging Miss Angela Starr King, sister of the late Rev. Thomas Starr King, to "favor the people of San Francisco with one of your reading entertainments at an early day, that we may be enabled to enjoy your peculiar talents, and give a Californian welcome to the sister of one whose name is cherished in the homes and hearts of people of the Pacific Coast."[1] This entertainment did take place, on the evening of July 11, but the newspaper petition was published a day after the fact. • • • *Sacramento Union* August 3, 1865: "Lieutenant Waite was only 28 years old. He was a native of Albany (New York), where his mother is still living. Having received a military education at West Point, Waite received the commission of Second Lieutenant in the Ninth Infantry, in 1861. As aide-de-camp and adjutant on General Wright's staff, he resided in headquarters in Sacramento, and had here an extensive circle of acquaintance. When, last summer, the threatening situation induced a number of our citizens to form a light artillery company, Lieutenant Waite volunteered to serve as instructor, and devoted himself to this self-imposed task...." • • • The *Sacramento Bee*, August 3, 1865, included corrected information: "In the *Union* of this morning an error occurs respecting Lieut. E.D. Waite. His father is living, but his mother is dead. Again, he did not receive a military education at West Point; he was not a cadet at the Academy, but went from civil life into the Second New York Artillery, whence through the influence of Thurlow Weed and Senator Ira Harris, of New York, he obtained a commission in the regular army and was appointed a Lieutenant of the Ninth Infantry, on this coast." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (listing of identified bodies furnished by J.G. Wall of Crescent City): "Mr. Leach, U.S. Army, E.L. Lonate, G.W. Pollock, D. Parrish, George Church (colored), Lieut. E.D. Waite, U.S. Army, Charles Law (Negro), James Nisbet, A. Dwyer [Dyer], freight clerk of ship, James E. Frites, J. Strang, J.L. Anchoine." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 17, 1865 (dispatch from Crescent City, August 10): "The body of Lieut. Waite, of Gen. Wright's staff, has been recovered, and decently buried by Captain Buckley." • • • Presumably, Waite's body was disinterred, for the *Alta California* September 15, 1865, printed this: "The remains of Lieutenant Waite, of General Wright's staff, arrived by the *Del Norte,* and will be sent east by the steamer of the 18th instant." • • • *Alta California* October 16, 1865, included this from a letter received from "a respectable citizen of Crescent City," dated October 9: "[Contrary to a report that Officer Knower had done most of the work recovering and burying the bodies], Knower did not assist in the recovery of any bodies; the principal portion of them being recovered by ourselves—over 20 of them, including Nisbet, Parrish, Pollock, Waite, Dryer [Dyer] and others out at sea, from three to eight miles from Crescent City, at a great deal of labor, there being five boats employed recovering bodies, which was no pleasant business, all the bodies found being brought ashore, without respect to color, and in no instance was there anything taken from them, which in many places would have been the case, it being a very easy matter to have taken everything of value from them and let them go at the mercy of the sea." • • • Waite's funeral with full military honors took place on October 5, 1865.

Wedekind, George • • • Lost. • • • In 1864 Wedekind was a piano-forte tuner with M. Gray. He lived on the east side of Larkin Street between Bush and Pine streets.[2]

Weil, Isaac • • • Body recovered. • • • *Alta California*, August 25, 1865, account dated August 14: "The body of Isaac Weil, brother of David Weil of Portland; also a young lady supposed to be Miss N. Shirser, found at Gold Bluff...." • • • *Oregonian*, August 4, 1865: "Mr. Isaac Weil, a worthy young man about 21 years of age, native of Bavaria, who has been with us a few years...leaves brothers in this city to mourn his death." • • • *Oregonian*, August 15, 1865: "In Memoriam. At a special meeting of the Portland Turn Verein [gymnastic club], held on the 13th inst., the following was adopted: Sorrow sears the heart of men: Inexorable death has torn from our midst one whose loss is the more keenly felt because in him a link in the chain of our Brotherhood is broken. The Turner [gymnast] Isaac Weil we have lost one who, by his steady and untiring interest in the welfare of our Association, and by his social gratitude has endeared himself to all who knew him. And be it further resolved: That his memory shall be ever fresh in the minds of his acquaintance. That these resolutions be spread upon the records of the Verein, and published in the *Daily Oregonian,* and that a copy of the same be tendered to the relatives of the deceased. The course of Nature's inevitable laws fixes the aim and end of life. Appreciating this truth, may the relatives and mourners find that solace which time and reflection alone can afford. In the name of the Portland Turn Verein, S. Goldsmith, Leopold Wolff, S. Moritz, F. S. Ostheim, Portland, August 15th, 1865. • • • *Alta California,* August 26, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which arrived from Humboldt yesterday, brought down the bodies of James Nisbet..., Danl. Parrish, Miss Mary Berry, G.W. Pollock, James R. Richards, late of the firm of Richards & McCraken, and Mr. Weil...."

Wendell, Mrs. • • • "Colored." • • • Lost.

Wendell, Mrs., child of, name unknown • • • Lost.

***Wilder, Martha E., Miss.** • • • Saved.[3] • • • According to survivor Mrs. Stott's account, *Alta California*, August 10, 1865, a Miss *Elizabeth Wild,* who was traveling with Rosanna Keenan to Victoria[6] got into the life boat with her. The survivors list shows a Martha E. Wilder and no one by the name of Wild. In the August 11, 1865, *Alta California,* Miss Wilder claimed she was traveling to Victoria to enter into domestic service as a child's nurse. • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 9, 1865: "The steamer *Del Norte,* which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan* arrived here at half-past 2 o'clock today. The following are the memoranda and list of passengers.... Besides there were Mrs. M. Rhinehardt,[4] Miss M.G. Wilder, Mrs. Stott and child, Mrs. Tweedle, one Chinawoman and child, and 11 of the crew." • • • *Alta California,* August 10, 1865: "Mrs. Stott, who was on her way to Victoria, with her little son, six or seven years of age, was among those who were saved and returned by the *Del Norte.* She says that she had been somewhat sick on Sunday morning and remained upon the hurricane deck, in company with her son and a girl named Elizabeth Wild, who was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan. When the vessel struck she noticed that everything about the deck appeared to be loose and the whole vessel apparently shattered. A moment after planks came up alongside from the steamer's bottom. She got into the small boat as soon as possible with her son and the girl Wild." • • • *Alta California,* August 11, 1865: "Among those who were saved from the wreck of the steamer *Brother Jonathan,* was Martha E. Wilder, a girl of 16 years of age, one of a family of six children with a widowed mother residing on Berry Street. She left this city engaged to go into domestic service as child's nurse, in Victoria.[5] Her life was saved through the heroism of Mr. John Hensley of the steamer, as she was [illegible] into the sea by the careening of the vessel, and would have been lost but for his gallant conduct grasping her, as it were, from the jaws of

[1] *Alta California,* July 11, 1865.

[2] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1864–5, p. 207.

[3] List of survivors published in *Alta California* and *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* August 5, 1865.

[4] Mrs. M. Rhinehardt probably should be Mrs. [illegible] and child.

[5] Langley's *San Francisco Directory,* 1865–6, p. 413 lists Frederick A. Wilder, clerk at 77 Washington Market. He lived at [illegible] 77 Washington Market was held by the partnership of [illegible] (Langley advertisement, p. 684).

[6] According to Mrs. Stott's eyewitness testimony in the *Alta California,* August 10, 1865, quoted above, "Miss Wild" was on her way to Victoria with Mrs. Keenan (a lady of uncertain reputation).

death, and placing her in Mr. Patterson's boat. At Crescent City, the ladies provided her with clothing, and she reached this city on the steamer *Del Norte*, the Purser of which kindly furnished her with every accommodation, even including money. On her arrival, being unknown she waited for some time unnoticed, and on application to the purser, was placed in charge of Joseph McCall, the driver of one of Mr. Wm. Taylor's carriages, to be driven home. On arriving at the designated locality, McCall noticed that the appearance of the residence and its inmates did not evince an over-abundance of means, yet, being an employee, he was compelled to collect the regular fare. He was so much impressed with the fact that the family were in absolute need, that he at once communicated the circumstance to his employer, the proprietor of the Cosmopolitan Hotel carriages, who immediately proceeded in person to the house and returned the fare so collected. Mr. Taylor's benevolence did not end here, for he not alone made a suitable donation of his own, but conveyed a person to the place who helped to relieve the pressing wants of the family. The attention of the benevolent is called to the case. We take more than usual pride in calling attention to the disinterested and charitable conduct of Mr. Taylor and his employee, as we well know that many in his same line of business have caused severe reflections to be cast on hackmen in general." • • • *Weekly Union Record*, Oroville, Butte County, August 12, 1865, account of Emory Wing, a soldier stationed near Crescent City, dated August 1: "One lady that was saved had about as much clothing as mother Eve before her fall. One of the sailors gave her a pair of pants and a jacket."

Woodlock, Mrs. • • • Lost

Wright, George, Brigadier General, U.S.A. • • • Body recovered • • • Wright was born in Vermont in 1803. Educated in public schools, he later attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, graduated, and was promoted to 2nd lieutenant in the 3rd U.S. Infantry on July 1, 1822. He served at Fort Howard, WI, then at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, until 1828. He went to Fort Leavenworth until 1831, when he was promoted to adjutant of his regiment. On October 20, 1836, he was made a captain. In 1838 he was sent to the 8th Infantry at that regiment's organization, and subsequently served during border troubles with Canada in the Sackett's Harbor, New York, until 1840. He went with the 8th Infantry to Florida and fought in the war against the Seminole Indians, remaining there until 1844. He was breveted major "for meritorious conduct, zeal, energy and perseverance." In the War with Mexico in 1846 he served in action from Vera Cruz to Molino del Rey and was wounded in the latter encounter. In 1848 he was named major; in 1855 he was made colonel of the 9th Infantry. He later served in the Washington and Oregon territories (see Chapter 15). At the beginning of the Civil War he was in charge of the Department of Oregon. On September 28, 1861, he was placed in charge of the Department of the Pacific, with the rank of brigadier general of volunteers. During the war he participated in many negotiations, programs, and actions, all of which helped to contribute to the general tranquility which the West Coast experienced while battles raged in the Midwest and East. For this he received generally high marks from just about everyone involved (or from everyone except Native Americans). However, over a period of 21 years Wright and his troops in various campaigns had killed or harassed thousands of Indians, all in the name of the United States government. • • • On July 28, 1865, Brigadier General Wright was on his way to Fort Vancouver to take command of the Department of the Columbia, comprising the Washington and Oregon District, to which post he had been assigned recently. Traveling with him was his wife and his adjutant, Lieutenant E.D. Waite. It could have been that there were other staff members aboard, for on Sunday, July 30, Greenfield Curtis, a soldier who was near the scene, included this in his diary: "The mate said that there were about 300 passengers and crew aboard, General Wright and four staff were aboard." If so, the other three staff members in addition to Waite may be listed under other names in the present roster. • • • In the final moments of the ship's life, Captain DeWolf, General George Wright, Joseph A. Lord, and James Nisbet were seen standing on the deck of the stricken vessel by Quartermaster Jacob Yates as the wooden surfboat carrying Yates and other survivors pulled away to safety. • • • The last moments of Wright's life were chronicled in this recollection: "One account of General Wright's death, as stated in a dispatch, is that when last seen he was standing with a life preserver in his hand. It seems that he had embarked in one of the boats, which was swamped after reaching the water. All were thrown into the sea, but General Wright was rescued by a rope being thrown him. He was drawn up on the ship, only to go down with her soon after. Another and a very touching incident is related in connection with his tragic death. Only a few minutes before the steamer disappeared General Wright was observed to take off his long military cloak and wrap it about Mrs. Wright, who stood at his side. He then folded his arms around her body and both stood still until the last lurch of the vessel was given, and all was ended. Calmly and with unshrinking courage husband and wife went to their death together. The remains of General Wright and wife were eventually found washed up on the beach, and they were taken to Sacramento for burial, where the remains of their son was afterward interred." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 2, 1865: "Brig. Gen. Wright entered the military service in 1822. He served with distinction in Florida, and subsequently in the Mexican War, where he led the assaulting column in the battle of Molina Del Rey—one of the most gallant feats of the war. At the close of the Mexican War he was detailed to the Pacific Coast, where he served most of the time since commanding at different times the districts of Oregon, Lower California, and the Department of the Pacific...." • • • *Sacramento Union* August 3, 1865: "It was only a few days since that he bade farewell to our citizens on the occasion of a dinner tendered to [Gen. Wright] as he was on the eve of his departure to take command of the Department of Columbia. He had long been a resident of Sacramento.... We understand that the assignment to his new command of the Department of Columbia was one most grateful to his feelings, for reasons of a somewhat official character. It is not unlikely also, that private considerations governed him somewhat in desiring the new position to which he had been lately assigned by the general government. His daughter is the wife of Brigadier General Alvord, commanding the district of Oregon, and it is not unnatural to suppose that General Wright and wife, in their declining years, looked with pleasure upon the prospect of a reunion with so near a relative, and one so fitted to minister to their comfort. Colonel Thomas Wright, of the Sixth Infantry, California Volunteers, and Assistant Provost Marshal, stationed at San Francisco, is a son of General Wright. We reproduce in this connection a notice from the *Union* of June 27th, 1864, published on the occasion of General Wright being relieved from the command of the Department of the Pacific. It is as appropriate now as it was then: 'General Wright, a native of Vermont, graduated at West Point in July 1822, and entered upon a soldier's life as Second Lieutenant in the Third Infantry. In March, 1842, he had reached the brevet rank of Major, which was conferred for "meritorious conduct and zeal, energy and perseverance in the war against the Florida Indians.' He received the brevet of Lieutenant

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Appleton's Cyclopædia of American Biography, Vol. VI, 1889, pp. 622-623, here lightly paraphrased and adapted.

Alta California August 2, 1865; other sources.

Esther Ruth Smith. *The History of Del Norte County California*, 1953, pp. 66-67.

Alta California, August 10, 1865. Report from J.H.G., a correspondent in Crescent City, August 6, describing the events aboard ship during the disaster, as reported by Yates.

San Francisco Chronicle, February 11, 1894 (Retrospective commentary as part of a feature on the *Brother Jonathan*).

Colonel for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Cherubusco. At Molino del Rey he commanded the storming party and was wounded. For his brave conduct on this occasion he received the brevet of Colonel. At the close of the Mexican War his position in the regular army was that of Major in the Fourth Infantry. Assigned to duty on this coast, the General was particularly distinguished for the energy and skill with which he operated against the savages of Oregon. After the nation became involved in the Civil War and the government was compelled to concentrate to the East all the available military talent; when General Sumner—who seasonally rescued this department from the designs of Sidney Johnston and his associates in treason—was summoned to Washington, it was deemed of the first importance that an officer whose experience and fidelity justified entire confidence should succeed to the command, and Wright, whose age probably unfitted him for active service in the field during a great war, was recommended as the most suitable man for the position. The danger of a serious outbreak on this coast may be said to have passed before the close of 1861. The people had spoken with a decided and potential voice at the ballot box—the loyalty of the vast majority was positive and determined—and General Wright had found a smoother path before him than had been anticipated. The local authorities reflecting the loyalty of the people stood ready to render zealots and efficient co-operation in any emergency. The disaffected knew their weakness and the price of their toleration, and but few of them were disposed to risk consignment to Alcatraz. The actual military duties of the commanding general were limited to the distribution of garrisons, the guarding of the frontier, the suppression of hostile Indians, and the protection of a portion of the overland route. These duties have been satisfactorily performed, although the force at the command of the general has been small—too small for the imperial extent and value of the territory to be guarded. So far as these matters are concerned, we think it may be said that General Wright has done a soldier's duty in a soldier's way.'" • • • The *Sacramento Bee*, August 3, 1865, included corrected information: "The *Union* of this morning contains several inadvertent errors respecting the family of General Wright. His wife, whose maiden name was Margaret Foster, was born at Syracuse, New York, and is the sister of the widow of the late Gen. E.V. Sumner, U.S.A. His daughter is not the wife of Gen. Alvord, but of Capt. Owens, of the Ninth Infantry, U.S.A., Gen. Wright's own regiment. His oldest son, Thomas F. Wright is Colonel of the Sixth Infantry C.V., stationed at the Presidio, San Francisco. His youngest son, Montgomery Wright, was assistant adjutant general on Gen. Buell's staff, until after that General's retirement, when he resigned and went to Louisville, Kentucky, where he married a Miss Ewing and entered upon the practice of the law...." • • • *Alta California*, August 4, 1865: "...He leaves a son in the service, a colonel, commanding the Sixth Regiment of California Volunteers, at the Presidio...." • • • *Oregon Reporter*, August 5, 1865: "The cause of civil order, public and private right, on this coast, has lost a noble and most gallant friend. At a time when excitement, violence, and a species of maddening fanaticism ruled the hour, General Wright held the supreme military command on this coast. It was perfectly in his power to have kindled the flame of Civil War in his department, and to have reenacted the bloody scenes which desolated so large a portion of the Union, by merely yielding to the clamors of the leaders of the party which ruled the councils of the nation, and the states upon this coast.... The incentives offered to the ambition of a less honorable and firm general would have been too powerful to overcome. (We find that his successor was too weak to combat them, when, happily for the peace of the coast, his yielding did but little harm.) We believe that General Wright's refusal to subserve the interests of those who desired war on this coast caused him the loss of his command and the sacrifice of his hopes of promotion. But his refusal, while it cost him the support and friendship of the venal, interested politician, endeared him to the hearts of the whole people.... His interference with the freedom of the press drew upon him severe animadversion, but subsequent events proved that the administration in Washington, and not the general, was responsible for it.... The whole people of Oregon, regardless of party, unite in a feeling of profound grief for the loss of which they, in common with the thousands of Wright's friends through the length and breadth of this coast, experience." • • • *Oregonian* August 8, 1865: "He was born in Vermont, and appointed to a place in West Point from that State. On the first of July 1822, he was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the Third Infantry. He was breveted colonel on the 8th of September 1847, and made full colonel on the 3d of March 1855. Shortly after this, he came to Oregon, bringing his regiment, the Ninth Infantry, with him. He remained here as commander of this Military District until the summer of 1861. He then went to California. In September of the same year, he was commissioned Brigadier-General of Volunteers. From that time until the arrival of General McDowell, he commanded the military forces of the Pacific coast. Since the time McDowell assumed the command of the Department of the Pacific, General Wright commanded the District of California until his departure a few days since for Vancouver to take charge of the new Department of Columbia. During the five years of his stay in Oregon, General Wright became well known to our people, and was held by them in the highest estimation. The reputation he bore here, was that of an upright gentleman, and an able and efficient officer. He came among us at a time when our frontiers were distracted by the horrors of a savage warfare which compelled the people to arm in defense of their own lives. It was universally acknowledged by our people that the efforts of General, then Colonel Wright, did much to re-establish peace and to provide for the protection and safety of the outlying settlements. When he went to California in 1861, his departure was deeply regretted. A short time ago, when it was decided that he should return, the people and the military forces here received the announcement with the greatest satisfaction. From a knowledge of his past services here, it was felt that his presence at this juncture would be of great advantage. Much was expected of his military administration by those who are exposed to the annoyances incident to living in a country filled by predatory Indians, as is eastern Oregon even now. But we are doomed to disappointment. In this community, sorrow for his loss is universal and profound. Upon his family, some of whom were here waiting for him, the grief falls with crushing weight. General Wright will long be remembered by those here and elsewhere whose fortune it has been to know him well." • • • *Sacramento Bee*, August 11, 1865: "Martha E. Wilder, another of the survivors, says that when the ship struck she saw Mr. Belden on deck.... Afterward she saw [Belden] standing on the hurricane deck with two life preservers on, and close by stood General Wright, with his wife's arm locked in his, Captain DeWolf, and another gentleman, supposed to be Major Eddy. There they all stood, bravely and calmly, until the waters covered them. It is stated that Mrs. General Wright was put in the boat saved, but afterwards, for some reason, returned on deck again with the hope, perhaps, that she might be placed in a larger boat." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865, reported [illegible] that Gen. George Wright's son was part of a search party: "The steamer *Del Norte*, which lately took the rescue parties to the scene of the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, arrived here at half-past [illegible] o'clock to-day. Among the passengers of the *Del Norte* are Colonel Wright, Captain Pollock, Mr. Ford, and others who went up for the purpose of endeavoring to recover the bodies, or learn some tidings of their missing friends." • • • *Oregonian*, August 15, 1865: "The Last Of The Steamer *Col. Wright*. The steamer *Col. Wright* is now being torn to pieces, and divested of her machinery. The last trip made by her was when under command of Capt. Stump, a few months since. It was attempted to take her above the rapids of the Snake River to Farewell Bend, to form another link in the steps toward the center of the continent from the Pacific. On that trip she was badly broken up, and being the pioneer boat on the upper Columbia, having done excellent ser-

vice, made plenty of money for her owners, and been further into the heart of the regions east of us on the waters of the Snake than any other steam craft, her owners concluded to cut her down.... The *Col. Wright* was named in honor of the noble and brave commander of this military department, and it was a striking coincidence that the work of tearing her to pieces commenced the day following the disaster at sea, in which the much respected Brigadier General Wright found a watery grave. • • • *Sacramento Bee* August 19, 1865: "In compliance with orders from Gen. McDowell, Col. McGarry has directed the firing of a federal salute of 13 guns and the lowering of the national flag at all public buildings, tomorrow, in honor to the memory of the late General Wright, U.S.A. The same will be fired at noon, tomorrow, by the Sacramento Light Artillery, Captain Edgar Mills." • • • Wright's remains arrived in San Francisco via the *S.S. Del Norte* on October 12, 1865. The funeral ceremony for Gen. and Mrs. Wright took place at the Calvary Church, San Francisco, on October 21, after which both caskets were shipped by river steamer to Sacramento for interment. • • • *Sacramento Union* October 23, 1865: "The remains of General Wright and those of Mrs. Wright, in accordance with arrangements previously announced, arrived in the city yesterday morning, and were buried in the City Cemetery in the afternoon. Both were passengers on the *Brother Jonathan* and both perished with the wreck of that vessel. After a lapse of several weeks their remains were recovered and brought to San Francisco. In that city appropriate respect was paid to the deceased on Saturday, by a funeral procession and sermon, after which the remains were placed on board the steamer *Sacramento*. They were brought to this city by a guard of honor appointed at San Francisco, and soon after 7 o'clock yesterday morning they were placed in charge of the Committee of Reception appointed in this city, who visited the San Francisco boat for the purpose of receiving them. The two coffins were conveyed by the Committee from the steamer to the Senate Chamber, where they remained in state during the forenoon. At the hour of the reception at the boat and transfer to the Senate Chamber the church bells and fire bells were tolled, and throughout the day all the flags of the city were displayed at half mast and trimmed with emblems of mourning. The front of the Orleans Hotel (formerly the home and headquarters of General Wright) was festooned with drapery. At the Senate Chamber the Committee on Decorations had prepared the hall for the occasion by draping the walls with black and white trimmed with evergreens. The platform occupying the center of the room, covered with black, was decorated with flags of the [illegible], and black and white plumes at each side. On this catafalque the two coffins were placed and were guarded by a guard of honor until their removal to the church. On each coffin was a silver plate containing an appropriate inscription, and on each were laid garlands of white flowers and evergreens. The Senate Chamber was visited by large numbers during the forenoon, a considerable proportion of the visitors being ladies. At about 2 o'clock the coffins were removed to the Congregational Church on Sixth street, where the Rev. J.H. Dwinell, Rev. F. Chapman and Rev. M.C. Briggs each delivered a brief discourse appropriate to the occasion. During the performance of the services within the church, the building was densely crowded with mourners, while hundreds who could not have gained admittance, remained on the outside, occupying the sidewalks on the line of the procession. At the close of the ceremony in the church, the coffins were again brought out and placed in the hearse provided for them. The military, Sacramento Fire Department, Pioneers, carriages, etc., which thronged the streets in the vicinity of the church, were then set in motion by General Howell and aides, and the procession was formed and moved. The funeral cortege—which was over a mile in length—was the largest ever witnessed in this city. It required about half an hour to pass a given point. On arriving at the City Cemetery the interment took place in the State plot. After the remains of General Wright and those of his wife were deposited in their last resting place, three volleys were fired over their graves by the battalion under Colonel Hamilton." • • • Many years later the *Sacramento Bee*, August 19, 1899, included this: "Disaster by Sea Brought to Memory: "On the 11th day of last month, by direction of the President, the new military post near Spokane Washington, was named Fort Wright, in honor of General George Wright, who was Colonel of the Ninth Infantry, and a Brigadier-General of Volunteers. The dispatch which gave this intelligence also adds: 'Colonel Wright defeated the allied bands of Indians near Spokane Falls on the 5th of September, 1858. He was drowned July 30, 1865, in the wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*, while on the way to assume command of the Department of the Columbia.' This telegram recalls the fact that, although 34 years have passed since the occurrence of that tragedy of the sea, it is still well remembered by many people in this city and state; with the single exception of the loss of the *Pacific* off Cape Flattery in 1875, no such terrible ocean horror was ever recorded on the Pacific Coast.... The accompanying half-tone shows the monument at the City Cemetery which was erected over his remains by the government some years later. The inscription is as follows: 'Gen. George Wright, U.S.A. And Margaret W., His Wife. Died: July 30, 1865.—Lovely in their lives, and in their death They were not divided.' Their son, T.F. Wright, died several years later, and is interred beside his parents in the same plat, and in another panel of the monument is chiseled the following: 'Col. T.F. Wright, died in the Modoc War, April 26, 1873.—Aged 43 years.' Mrs. Wright's maiden name was Margaret Foster, and she was a native of Syracuse, New York. they had three children, a daughter and two sons. The daughter was married to Captain Owens, a member of General Wright's regiment in the War of the Rebellion. Their oldest son, Thomas F., fell in the Modoc Indian War in 1873, and the youngest, Montgomery, settled in Louisville, Kentucky, immediately after the close of the war, and entered upon the practice of law. During the war he was assistant adjutant on general Buell's staff."

Wright, Margaret Foster (Mrs. George) • • • Body recovered • • • Buried near her husband; see above. • • • The *Alta California*, August 10, 1865, included this, an excerpt adapted from the statement of survivor Martha Stott: "Mrs. Gen. Wright came to the side of the boat in which Mrs. Stott was saved, and was going to get in, but Capt. DeWolf, who seemed to think the boat too full already, took hold of her arm and walked with her towards the opposite side of the vessel where they were getting into a larger boat, which was swamped in lowering it into the water." • • • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 10, 1865 (from the statement of survivor Jacob Yates): "[After lowering one boat, the] captain now ordered the second mate to lower a boat, already nearly filled with female cabin passengers, among whom was Mrs. Gen. Wright. The boat was lowered, but before the seamen had time to man her, the steamer careened and upset her, throwing all on board into the water. The mate (Mr. Campbell) drew up such of the ladies as he could reach from the steamer's chairs where he held on." • • • A further commentary was provided by this comment from survivor Mrs. Mina Bernhardt:[1] "Owing to the heavy sea many had been sick in their berths. When I reached the deck one boat full of women was already lowered. Among them was Mrs. General Wright. Just then a woman sprang into the boat from the deck, and at the same instant the steamer careened and upset the boat." • • • The body of Mrs. Wright was brought from Crescent City aboard the *S.S. Del Norte*, arriving in San Francisco on October 2, 1865.

TOTAL PASSENGERS: 142.

TOTAL SURVIVORS AMONG THE PASSENGERS: 8.

[1] *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1894 (Retrospective commentary).

GRAND TOTAL, CREW AND PASSENGERS: 60 + 142 = 202, plus additional passengers, number not known, who were not listed in the records.

GRAND TOTAL, SURVIVORS AMONG THE CREW AND PASSENGERS: 21.

Questionable and Erroneous Names

The following passenger and crew names have appeared in various accounts of the nineteenth century and later, and are believed to be incorrect or are unverified for the reasons given.

Arduff, Ed. C. [erroneous entry] • Erroneous listing for Edward C. Cardiff in one account.[1]

Fountain, C., Mrs., and children [erroneous entry] • The *Alta California*, August 6, 1865, stated that the entry clerk of the steamship company misunderstood the name of Mrs. C. Fountain, daughter, and child, and that it should have been listed as Mrs. Cecilia Thornton, daughter and child. Another account erroneously gave the surname as Fountani.

Hall [or Hill], G.W. [questionable] • In the *San Francisco Chronicle* of February 8, 1894, "world champion diver" John F. Ryan said that G.W. Hill, assistant engineer of the *Brother Jonathan*, showed him where the wreck lay. Don Marshall, in *California Shipwrecks*, lists a crew member by the name of G.W. Hill (Hall), 3rd engineer; however, the same writer does not list this gentleman as being a survivor of the wreck. His name did not appear on any crew list in the newspapers published in 1865, nor has it been located in any contemporary (circa 1865) account. In *Oregon Shipwrecks*, p. 5, Don Marshall calls him a "free Negro." On page 8 he states that "Third Engineer G.W. Hill fought his way up and out of the fast flooding engine room.... Hill was the last man to escape the inky-black maelstrom swiftly welling up from down below." However, there was no record of neither G.W. Hill (or Hall) nor anyone else of the Negro race among those who came ashore in the wooden surfboat. The circumstances of his not having been in the original crew list, not having been in any account of people saved, and not being interviewed (as saved crew members were) after the sinking calls into question his connection with the ship.

Lane, Joseph [questionable] • In *California, Shipwrecks,* Don Marshall includes the name "Joe Lane." However, no such name has been found in any nineteenth-century accounts. There was a revenue cutter named the *Jos. Lane,* on which Captain Chaddock served.[2] Joseph Lane was a governor of Oregon and was not aboard the *Brother Jonathan* at the time of its loss.

Powell, David C., and Mr. and Mrs. and four children [erroneous entries] • Should be Rowell.

Trites, James [possible erroneous listing] • Believed to be James Frites.

Rhinehardt, Mrs. [erroneous entry] • *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 9, 1865, referred to a "Mrs. M. Rhinehardt." It is believed that Mrs. Mina Bernhardt (or Bernhart) was intended.

Wilson, Emily [fictional character] • *California Today*, a Sunday supplement, June 30, 1974, included an article, "The Brother Jonathan," which dramatized the events of the *Brother Jonathan* tragedy. "The woman, Emily Wilson, is a fictional composite of the many steerage class passengers who warranted no official memories."

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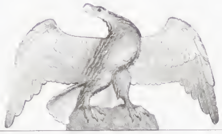
1. *Alta California*, August 17, 1865.
2. *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, August 2, 1865.

Appendix IV



A Visit to the San Francisco Mint

Hutchings' California Magazine, October 1856, presented "Coining Money," a tour of the San Francisco Mint (reproduced on the following pages). As this account gives a detailed view of the refining, assaying, and coining processes, it is reproduced on the following pages. Among other things, the article aids in the appreciation of the extensive and complex process by which raw metal was converted into coins; this dramatically demonstrates the desirability of a far simpler alternative: the casting of gold into bars for shipment.

HUTCHINGS'
CALIFORNIA MAGAZINE.

VOL. I. OCTOBER, 1856. NO. IV.

FRONT VIEW OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BRANCH MINT.

COINING MONEY,

AT THE SAN FRANCISCO BRANCH MINT.

On the north side of Commercial street, between Montgomery and Kearny, there stands a dark, heavy looking building, with heavy iron bars, and heavy iron shutters, to windows and doors; and high above, standing on, and just peering over a heavy cornice, there is a large American eagle; looking down into the building, as if he meant to see, and take notes, of all that is going on within, "and print 'em too." At his back there is a small forest of chimney stacks, from which various kinds of smoke, and different colored fumes, are issuing. This building is the Branch Mint of San Francisco.

On the pavement, in front, stands a number of odd looking, square boxes, containing bottles with glass necks rising above the top, and in which are

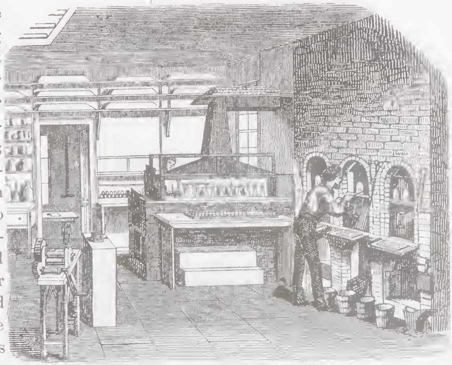
the various kinds of acid used in the manufacture of gold and silver coin within.

In the street can be seen drays and wagons with men unloading supplies of various kinds for the Mint; express wagons with packages of the precious metal from all parts of the mines; men going up with carpet sacks hanging heavily on their hand, all desirous of having their gold dust converted into coin.

At the entrance door a man is sitting whose business it is to inquire your business whenever you present yourself for admission; and, if it is tolerably clear to him that you have no intention of obtaining a hatful of gold without a proper certificate; and more, that you have business dealings with Uncle Samuel; or, at least, wish to see how gold and silver is made into coin; why, it is probable that you may be allowed to pass:

By the kindness of Mr. Lott, the Superintendent of the Mint, and the courtesy of the officers of the different departments, every facility was offered us for obtaining sketches, and all the necessary information concerning the *modus operandi* of coining, cheerfully given in all its branches.

To make the subject as plain as possible, we will suppose that the reader has just placed a bag of gold at the

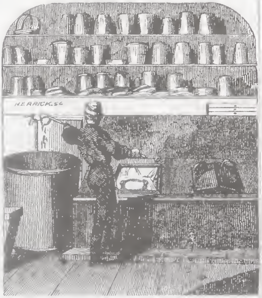


ASSAYING THE "CHIPS."

Treasurer's counter, for the purpose of having it coined. Here the Receiving Clerk takes it, and after accurately weighing it, hands to the depositor a certificate for the gross weight of gold dust received, before melting. It is then sent to the *Melting Room*, where it is put into a black-lead crucible, melted, (each deposit is melted by itself,) and run into a " bar." A "chip," weighing about a tenth of an ounce, is then taken from each end of the bar, at opposite corners,—one from the top, the other from the bottom side. These chips are then taken to the *Assay Room* where they are carefully analyzed, by chemical process, and the exact amount of gold, silver, and other metals contained in each chip, accurately ascertained. The Assayer then reports to the Treasurer the exact proportion of gold, silver, and other metals, found in the chips. The standard fineness of the whole bar is then determined, and the value of the deposit ascertained; it then awaits, in the Treasurer's Office, the orders of the depositor. When it

is withdrawn, the depositor presents his certificate to the Superintendent's Clerk, who issues a warrant upon the Treasurer for the nett value of the deposit; and, upon the payment of this warrant, in coin, or bar, the Treasurer delivers the Mint memorandum, which contains the weight of the deposit before and after melting, fineness, nett value, &c., &c.

To facilitate business and prevent delay, a large amount of coin is always kept on hand, so that depositors are not

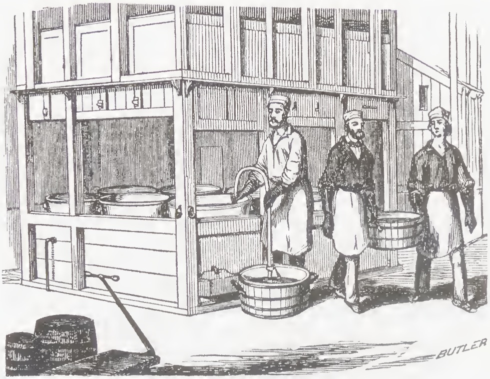


MAKING THE GRANULATIONS.

required to wait until the gold dust taken in, is coined; but the moment its value is ascertained from the Assayer, the value is promptly paid the depositor: this is a great public convenience.

Now with the reader's permission let us see the gold bars accurately weighed in the Treasurer's Office; and let us carefully watch the many and interesting processes through which they must pass while being converted into coin.

On leaving the Treasurer's hands they are first sent to the *Melting Room*—where, as California gold contains from three to twelve per cent. of silver, it becomes necessary in order to extract it, to alloy the gold with about twice its weight of silver; and thereby destroy the affinity of the gold for the silver, this enables the acid to act upon the silver. For this purpose, the gold and silver are melted together; and, while in a hot and fluid state, is poured gradually into cold water, where it forms into small thin pieces somewhat resembling the common pop-corn in appearance, and these are called "granulations." The *Granulations* are then conveyed from the *Melting Room* to the *Refining Room;* where they are placed in porcelain pots, that are standing in vats lined with lead. Nitric Acid is then poured in upon the granulations, in about the proportion of two and a half pounds of acid, to one of gold; and, after the porcelain pots are thus filled sufficiently, the shutters, by which they are surrounded, are fixed closely down, and the granulations and acids boiled by steam for six hours, by which process the silver and all the base metals are dissolved, while the gold lies upon the bottom untouched. The bright orange colored vapor that we see issuing from the top of one of the chimneys of the Mint is generated from this process. After boiling, the solution is drawn out of the pots by means of a gold syphon, (worth over two thousand dollars) into small tubs; it is then carried and emptied into a large tub or vat, twelve feet in diameter and six feet in depth—where a stream of salt water is poured upon it, which precipitates the *nitrate of silver* contained in solution, and it becomes *chloride of silver.* The chloride is then run out of the vat into large filters, where it is washed until the water es-



DRAWING OFF THE ACID FROM THE PORCELAIN POTS.

caping from the filter is perfectly free from the acid. The chloride of silver is then taken out of the filter and placed in a "reducing vat" where it is mixed with *granulated zinc* and water: oil of vitriol is then poured in upon it, where by the action of the oil of vitriol upon the zinc and the water, *hydrogen gas* is generated; which, combining with the *chlorine* of the *chloride of silver* forms *muriatic acid*, and leaves pure metalic silver, in fine powder, at the bottom of the reducing vat.

The silver is then taken out, and again washed carefully for the purpose of removing the acid, and the chloride of zinc that has been formed by the action of zinc upon the chloride of silver while in the reducing vat.

After the silver is thus thoroughly washed, it is placed in a hydraulic press, and subjected to the enormous pressure of twelve thousand pounds to the square inch, and the water nearly all forced out of it, leaving a compact, circular cake of silver, about ten inches in width, by three in thickness. These cakes are then placed on a drying-pan, and the remaining moisture dried out. The silver is now ready for melting, and making into coin; or, for use in the granulating process.

Now, if you please, let us return to the porcelain pots, and notice what becomes of the *gold* left in the bottom. This is now subjected to another boiling process of six hours, in fresh nitric acid in about the same proportion as before, during which time it is frequently stirred, to enable the acid to permeate the whole of the gold in the pot.

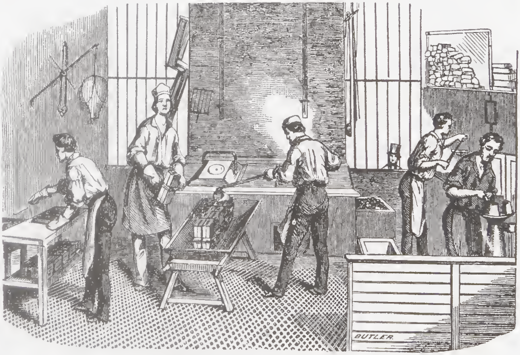
After this second boiling the acid is baled out (and saved for the first boiling process) and the contents of the porcelain pots emptied into a filter, where it is well washed with hot water, prepared expressly for this purpose, and the remaining nitrate of silver is entirely washed out, leaving nothing but pure gold. The water is now pressed out in the same manner as it was from the silver, and the cakes

locked up in a drying furnace for about three hours, when they are taken out and are ready for melting.

Let us now go to the *Melting Room.* There we find men moving about among "crucibles," "shoe" and "ingot-moulds," and what not, in front of the furnace, and as they lift back the cover, and the bright light breaks upon the eyes; down in the white heat we can see the crucible, ready to receive the precious metal. The gold is then put into it, with a sufficient amount of copper to reduce the standard of 1000 to 903. The gold is then run off into what are technically called "shoe-moulds." The bar thus run is termed "toughened bar." It is again assayed, for the purpose of knowing the exact amount of copper to be added to reduce it to 900–1000, or the United States' standard fineness of coin. It is then again melted and reduced to the above standard; after which it is run into "ingot-moulds," and is again assayed, to determine whether it is now of the fineness required.

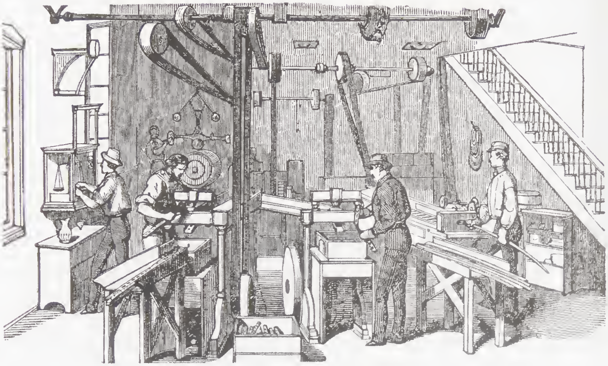
These ingots of standard gold, each weighing about sixty ounces, of which there are from thirty-six to forty in one "melt" are then "pickled," which, being interpreted, means, to heat them red-hot and immerse them in sulphuric acid water, which cleans and partially anneals them. They are then delivered by the Melter and Refiner to the Treasurer, who weighs them accurately and then delivers them to the *Coiner.*

The ingots thus delivered, for twenty dollar pieces, are about 12 inches in length, about 1 inch and 7-16ths in width, and about 1-2 an inch in thickness; yet for every different sized coin the width varies to suit.



RUNNING THE GOLD INTO INGOTS.

They are now removed to the *Rolling Room* where the ingots pass thirteen consecutive times through the rollers, and at each time decrease in thickness, and increase in length, until they are about three feet six inches long: they are then taken to the *Annealing*



ROLLING AND CUTTING ROOM.

Room, enclosed in long copper tubes, and securely sealed to prevent oxidation or loss of the metal. They are now placed in the annealing furnace, where, after remaining for about forty-five minutes in sealed tubes, they are taken out and cooled in clear water. The " strips " of gold are now ready for rolling to the finished thickness and are re-taken to the *Rolling Room* for that purpose; and are afterwards returned to the *Annealing Room* and subjected again to a red hot heat for forty-five minutes, and again cooled as before.

These " strips" are now carried to the *Drawing* and *Cutting Room*, where they are first pointed; then heated, by steam; then ' greased," with wax and tallow; and are then ready for the draw-bench. The point of the strip is then inserted in the " draw-jaw" and the whole strip is drawn through the " jaw" which reduces it exactly to the required thickness for coining. The strips thus gauged are then taken to the " cutting press," where, from the end of each strip a " proof-piece" is " punched " and accurately weighed; and, if found correct is punched into " blanks" or " planchets" at the rate of about one hundred and eighty per minute. Should any of the strips be found too heavy, they are re-drawn through the " draw-jaw." If too light, they are laid aside to be regulated, by what is technically termed the "doctor" —a process by which the strip is made concave, before the planchets are cut out, and which gives them the required weight. This is an improvement only in use in the San Francisco Branch Mint and is, we believe, the invention of Mr. Eckfeldt, the Coiner; and by which some thirteen thousand dollars in light strips are saved from re-melting every day. Simple as the fact appears, it prevents the melting of about four millions of dollars per annum, and is doubtless, a great saving to the public.

After the blanks or planchets are

cut out, the strips are bent in a convenient shape for re-melting, and are sent to the Coiner's Office to be weighed, preparatory to making up his account for the day, and which, with the planchets, must make up the gross amount received in the morning from the Treasurer.

They are afterwards delivered to the Treasurer, by whom they are again weighed and then sent to the Melter and Refiner to be again cast into ingots.

The planchets are then carried from the cutting-press to the *Cleaning Room* where they are boiled in very strong soap-suds, from which they are taken and dried in a pan, heated by steam, and then conveyed to the Coiner's Office to be weighed. After which, they are sent to the *Adjusting Room* where each piece is separately weighed, and those found too light, are condemned for re-melting ; and those which are too heavy are reduced, by filing, to the standard weight. All the planchets thus adjusted, are then re-taken to the Coiner's Office, and, with the filings and light planchets, are carefully weighed, and that weight must tally with the gross amount of the planchets delivered to the Adjustors during the day.

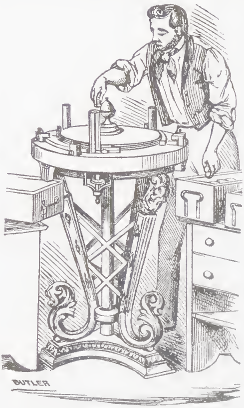
The work of "adjusting" is performed by females of whom from ten to fifteen are employed, according to the amount of labor to be accomplished.

From the adjusting room the planchets are taken to the *Milling Room*, where they are dropped into a tube,

ADJUSTING ROOM.

belonging to the "milling machine," and by means of a revolving circular steel plate, with a groove in the edge, and a corresponding groove in a segment of a circle, the planchets are borne rapidly round, horizontally, by which process the edges are thickened,

and the diameter of the planchet accurately adjusted to fit the collar of the



MILLING THE PLANCHETS.

"coining press." After "milling" they are returned to the Coiner's office and again weighed, to ascertain if the weight is correct.

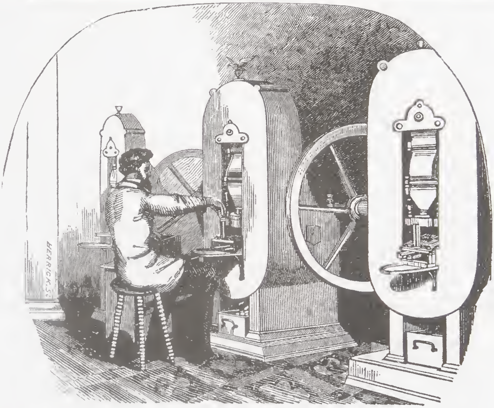
They are then sent to the *Annealing Room*, where they are put into square cast-iron boxes, with double covers, carefully cemented with fire-clay, and placed in the annealing furnace, where they are subjected to a red heat for about an hour, when they are taken out and poured into a "pickle" containing diluted sulphuric acid. By this process they are softened and cleansed; and after they are rinsed with hot water they are well dried in saw-dust heated by steam, taken out and returned to the Coiner's office, where they are again weighed, and afterwards carried to the *Coining Room*, to be "stamped." This process is performed by dropping the planchets into the tube in front of the machine, from whence they are carried by "feeders" to the "collar," into which they are dropped upon the lower die: the head die then descends, and by its immense power displaces every particle of gold in the planchet, and gives the impression upon both sides of the coin and the fluting on the edge, at the same moment. At every motion, the "feeders" not only take a planchet to the collar, but at the same time push the coin, previously struck, and now perfect, from the lower die, which rises and falls for the purpose at each revolution of the wheel, from whence the coin slides into a box underneath.

From the Coining Room they are again taken to the Coiner's office where they are weighed, counted and delivored to the Treasurer for payment to depositors.

There is one piece always taken out of about every sixty thousand dollars, coined into double-eagles, and a similar amount from smaller coins, which are

CLEANING THE PLANCHETS.

sent to Philadelphia, and carefully preserved for examination at the "judg-



STAMPING INTO COIN.

ment day," as it is curiously and expressively called, which takes place annually at Philadelphia, under the superintendence of commissioners appointed by the U. S. government.

We are surprised at the aggregate amount of coin produced in so short a time, in such a small and very inconvenient building; for, it seemed to us that every man was more or less in the others' way; and wherever the fault may lie, we think it of very questionable economy, that requires a remedy without delay.

The following statement, kindly furnished us by the officers, will show the large amount of

COINAGE AT THE U. S. BRANCH MINT,
From its Commencement up to September 15th, 1856.

Gold Coinage for 1854.

Double Eagles	$2,829,360 00	
Eagles	1,238,260 00	
Half Eagles	1,340 00	
Quarter Eagles	615 00	
Gold Dollars	14,632 00	
		$4,084,207 00
Bars		$5,631,151 43
Total		$9,715,358 43

Silver Coinage -None.

1855.

Double Eagles	$17,643,500 00	
Eagles	90,000 00	
Half Eagles	305,000 00	
Three Dollar Pieces	19,800 00	
		$18,058,300 00
Bars		3,359,377 43
		$21,417,677 43

Silver Coinage.

Half Dollars	$64,975 00	
Quarter Dollars	99,100 00	
		$164,075 00
Total Coinage, 1855		$21,581,752 43

1856.

Double Eagles	$19,395,000 00	
Eagles	600,000 00	
Half Eagles	455,500 00	
Quarter Eagles	122,800 00	
Three Dollar Pieces	73,500 00	
Gold Dollars	24,600 00	
		$20,671,400 00
Bars		3,047,001 28
		$23,718,401 28

Silver Coinage.

Half Dolllars	$105,500 00	
Quarter Dollars	71,500 00	
		$177,000 00
Total Coinage, 1856		$23,895,401 28

RECAPITULATION.

1854	$9,715,358 43
1855	$21,581,752 43
1856	$23,895,401 28
Total	$55,192,512 14

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Smith, Robert H. "Victor Smith Sacks the Port Townsend Custom House." *The Log,* August 30-Sept. 12, 1996.

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romantic accounts, sometimes *verbatim*, often without credit to the source.

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—— *U.S. Mint and Coinage.* New York: Arco Publishing, 1966. Definitive book on the inside workings of the Mint.

Taylor, Bayard. *Eldorado, or, Adventures in the Path of Empire.* New York City, NY: George P. Putnam, 1850. Descriptions of travel to California, life in San Francisco, life in the mining camps, etc., 1849-1850.

Taylor, William. *California Life Illustrated.* New York City, NY: Carlton & Porter, published for the author, 1860. Experiences of a minister including (p. 53) that a $20 gold coin was received as a contribution in Columa, CA, in the summer of 1849 ($20 gold coins were not minted for circulation until 1850; no privately minted 1849 specimens of this denomination are known in gold, either).

Thomas, Lately. *Between Two Empires: The Life Story of California's First Senator, William McKendree Gwin.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969. Includes information on Broderick and Kohler (pp. 60-61, not numismatically accurate) and Moffat & Co. (p. 94). Extensive entries refer to David Broderick, an enemy of Gwin.

Thompson, Joe D. "Old U.S. Mint at The Dalles is Monument to Argonaut Era." *Oregon Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 41, 1940.

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Wilson, Fred W. "The Lure of the River." *Oregon Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 34, 1933.

Wiltsee, Ernest A. *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific.* San Francisco, CA: Grabhorn Press, 1938. A superbly researched and written text of excellent historical reliability.

Wismer, D.C. "Banks and Banking Institutions." *The Numismatist,* June 1942. Listing of the dates and names of the first banks opened in each state (California, Washington, and Oregon information relevant to the present project).

Wright, Benjamin C. *San Francisco's Ocean Trade, Past and Future.* San Francisco: A. Carlisle & Co., 1911.

Wright, E.S. (edited by). *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest.* Portland, OR: Lewis & Dryden Publishing Co, 1895. With regard to the *Brother Jonathan,* the book has extensive coverage, but there are many errors; *e.g.,* p. 132, "The steamer was poorly equipped with life-saving apparatus," a launching date of 1852 (instead of the correct 1850), the myth of overloading in July 1865, etc. This book seems to have been the prime resource for many later writers; thus, many errors have been perpetuated elsewhere.

Wyman, Walker D. (editor). *California Emigrant Letters.* New York City, NY: Bookman Associates, Publishers, 1952. Collection of letters, mostly published in contemporary newspapers, sent from Californians to recipients back in the East.

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Newspaper accounts relating to the S.S. Brother Jonathan (by date)

With regard to newspaper articles of August 1865 concerning the ship, the same accounts were republished in many other papers besides the ones listed here. The following bibliography emphasizes accounts published in San Francisco (point of departure of the ship) and Portland (intended port of arrival).

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1859, March 16. Account of the re-named *Brother Jonathan. The Herald*, Crescent City, CA.

1861, May 4. "Ship Building in San Francisco." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1861, December 15. "Trial Trip of a New Steamer." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, July 21. Notice of recent trip to Portland and Victoria and return. *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, July 26. "Court Proceedings." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, July 27. Advertisement. *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, July 28. "Brigadier General Wright's Departure." • Advertisement. *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, July 29. "*Brother Jonathan's* Cargo List, Cleared, Value." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 2. "Letter from Crescent City." *Sacramento Daily Bee* Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 2. "Terrible Marine Disaster" *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 2. "Appalling Calamity! Steamer *Brother Jonathan* Lost Near Crescent City." • "The *Brother Jonathan.*" *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 2. "Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*" *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA. On this date a special edition, the *Steamer Alta California*, was prepared "for transmission to the Atlantic states, Europe, Mexico, and South America, by the steamer *Colorado*, which sails on the 3rd." Such editions were regularly issued for departing passengers and contained condensations of current news. The *Steamer* edition, not quoted here, reiterated the news of the *Brother Jonathan* under title "News of the Day."

1865, August 3. "Further of the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan.*" *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 3. "Lieutenant Waite, General Wright." *Sacramento Union*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 3. "Loss of the *Brother Jonathan.*" • "Joseph A. Lord" • "A Ray Of Hope." *Sacramento Daily Bee*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 3. "The 'Brother Jonathan' Wreck." *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 3. "Particulars of the Wreck." • "The Lost Steamer." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 4. "Brigadier General Wright, James Nisbet; Among the Lost" • Advertisement for safety equipment. • "Going in Search of the Dead." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 4. "The Appalling Calamity" • "Sorrowed Incidents." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 4. "The *Brother Jonathan*" *Sacramento Union*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 4. "The Dead of the Wreck." • "The Loss of the *Brother Jonathan*" *Sacramento Daily Bee*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 4. "The Disaster on the Coast" *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 4. "The Last of Earth." *Sacramento Daily Bee*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 4. News accounts. *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 5. "Financial and Commercial." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 5. "For the Wreck." *Sacramento Bee*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 5. "James Nisbet." *Sacramento Union*, Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 5. "The *Brother Jonathan* Disaster." *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 5. "The Late Calamity at Sea. The Practical Lesson it Teaches-Need of a better Plan for Launching Boats in an Emergency." Editorial. *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 5. "The Lost Steamer." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 5. "Wreck of Steamship *Brother Jonathan.*" • "Latest from the Wreck." • "Brigadier General George C. Wright." *The Oregon Reporter*, Jacksonville, OR.

1865, August 6. "Names Omitted!" *Alta California*, San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 6. "Sorrowing Incidents." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 7. "The Wrecked Steamer." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR.

1865, August 7. "The Brother Jonathan Calamity." *Oregon Statesman*, Salem, OR.

1865, August 8. "The Late Catastrophe." *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 8. "General Wright." *Oregonian,* Portland, OR.

1865, August 9. "Arrival of the 'Del Norte." *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 9. "Letter From Crescent City: The Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan." Sacramento Daily Bee,* Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 9. "News of the Day." *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 10. "Full Particulars of the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan." Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 10. "Further Particulars of the Wreck of the "*Brother Jonathan." San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 10. "Latest News from the Scene of the Wreck." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR

1865, August 11. "More Bodies Recovered from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan." Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 11. "Information from SF Newspapers." *Sacramento Daily Bee,* Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 12. "Steamship 'Brother Jonathan.'" *Weekly Union Record,* Oroville, Butte County, CA.

1865, August 12. "The *Brother Jonathan*-Two Bodies Washed Ashore." *Oregonian*, Portland, OR

1865, August 14. "Recovery of Four Bodies from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan." Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 14. "Among the Lost" • "*Brother Jonathan.*" *Oregon Statesman,* Salem, OR.

1865, August 15. "Captain DeWolf. Further from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*-More Bodies Recovered." *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA

1865, August 15. "The Wreck of the Brother Jonathan. Account of a Trip from Eureka to Gold-Bluff. The Search for the Bodies of the Lost." This issue includes a list of bodies described by the coroner. *San Francisco Bulletin*

1865, August 15. "Singular Incident." Reprinted from the *San Francisco Call,* August 8. Anecdote relating to the family of Captain [illegible] Brooks.

1865, August 15. Several accounts pertaining to the tragedy. *Oregonian,* Portland, OR.

1865, August 17. "Later from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan.*" • "Further from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan*" • "One of the Lost by the *Brother Jonathan.*" *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 1[illegible]. "The Brother Jonathan Catastrophe - Forty-nine Bodies Found." *San Francisco Evening Bulletin,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 19. "Gen. Wright." *Sacramento Daily Bee,* Sacramento, CA.

1865, August 19. "Latest from the Wreck." *The Oregon Reporter,* Jacksonville, OR. Article copied from and credited to the Yreka (CA) *Union,* date not given.

1865, August 21. "Further List of Bodies Recovered from the *Brother Jonathan.*" • "Still Further Particulars, Reported Murder and Robberies by the Indians." • "Wanted." *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 21. "From the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan.*" *Sacramento Daily Bee,* Sacramento, CA. Includes supplementary list of bodies described by the coroner.

1865, August 21. "Dr. Henry." *Oregon Statesman,* Salem, OR.

1865, August 25. "A Will Written. Further from the Wreck of the *Brother Jonathan." Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

1865, August 25. "From the *Brother Jonathan.*" *Sacramento Daily Bee,* Sacramento, CA. Includes second supplementary list of bodies described by the coroner.

1865, August 26. "The Lost by the *Brother Jonathan.*" *Alta California,* San Francisco, CA.

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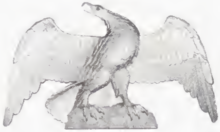

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